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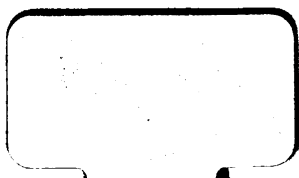
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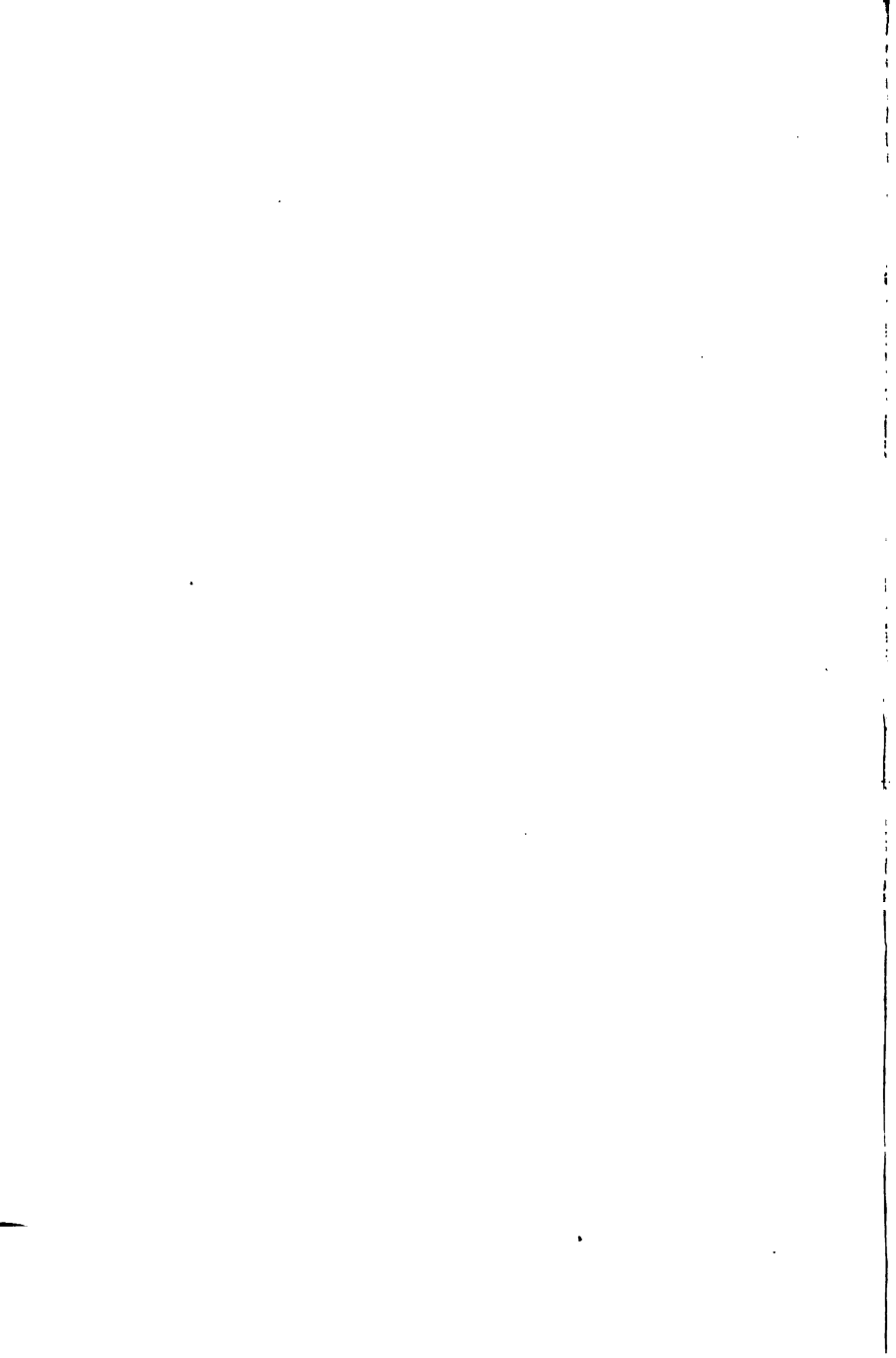


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## A FRIGATE'S NAMESAKE







"CLEAR AND TRUE RINGS OUT THE GIRLISH VOICE:  
'I CHRISTEN THEE WINEEGAN!'"



A  
FRIGATE'S NAMESAKE

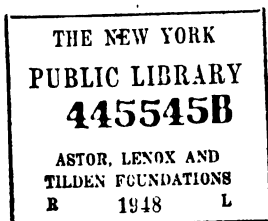
BY  
ALICE BALCH ABBOT x

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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER,  
IN LOVING GRATITUDE FOR THAT PRECIOUS TRUST,  
A LONG AND JOYOUS CHILDHOOD  
SPENT WITHIN THE SHELTER  
OF A HAPPY HOME



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## A FRIGATE'S NAMESAKE







## CHAPTER I

**I**T was the last day of September, and Essex Thurston was perfectly happy, a condition of mind quite possible when one is twelve years old and the state of affairs as follows: the finest of weather, a holiday to be celebrated, a book for which one has been longing for many a day, and finally the prospect of reading the same in one's favorite nook with no fear of interruption. To go even further into particulars, during the previous night a northwest wind had cleared the sky to its most beautiful blue, and was now sweeping the remaining white clouds rapidly before its strong breath, send-

ing the fleeting shadows chasing fast over land and sea. The holiday was the birthday of a namesake for whom Essex had such high regard that several years before she had declared her wish to receive at least one of her gifts at this season rather than at the time of her own anniversary. The gift for the present occasion had been Cooper's "Pilot," that most fascinating of sea-tales.

As for the security from interruption,—precious privilege, which no story-loving little maiden, with lessons to learn and household duties to perform, will fail to appreciate,—of course that could only have been made possible by the possession of a mother who had once been a little story-lover herself.

That morning, at the breakfast-table, when Essex's Uncle Owen had inquired whether any special form of celebration had been determined upon for the day, Mrs. Thurston, seeing the longing looks cast in the direction of the new book, had remarked :

"I was wondering how Essex would enjoy celebrating as I did on my fourteenth birthday. It happened to fall on a Saturday, and

I was told that I could spend the day exactly as I wished, the expectation being, I suppose, that I would choose to go on some expedition; but, having recently finished my first of Scott's novels with all the misery of being stopped in the midst of exciting situations by the demands of lessons, dish-washing, and sewing, I did not hesitate an instant, but chose to spend the whole day reading 'The Talisman.' Commencing directly after breakfast and stopping only for dinner and supper, the story was finished a half-hour before bedtime. Do you think," turning to her daughter, "that you would enjoy making a similar experiment?"

"Can I really?" Essex had asked.

"You can and you may, as far as I am concerned. I know that Judy will be only too willing to wash the cups and glasses for you, and as it rained yesterday, I think the parlor and uncle's room might be spared a dusting."

"Do you think I could go to the island?"

"And take your luncheon! That will be charming. Then you will be sure of no inter-

ruption. And under such very favorable circumstances, I should really think that by super-time all the ships ought to be satisfactorily sunk or in safety, the couples happily married or unhappily separated. If not, I suppose uncle and I might come over with a lamp—

“Mother dear,” and a kiss had stopped any further planning, “how do you know just what I want to do, and always let me do it?”

“Especially overhanding pillow-cases.”

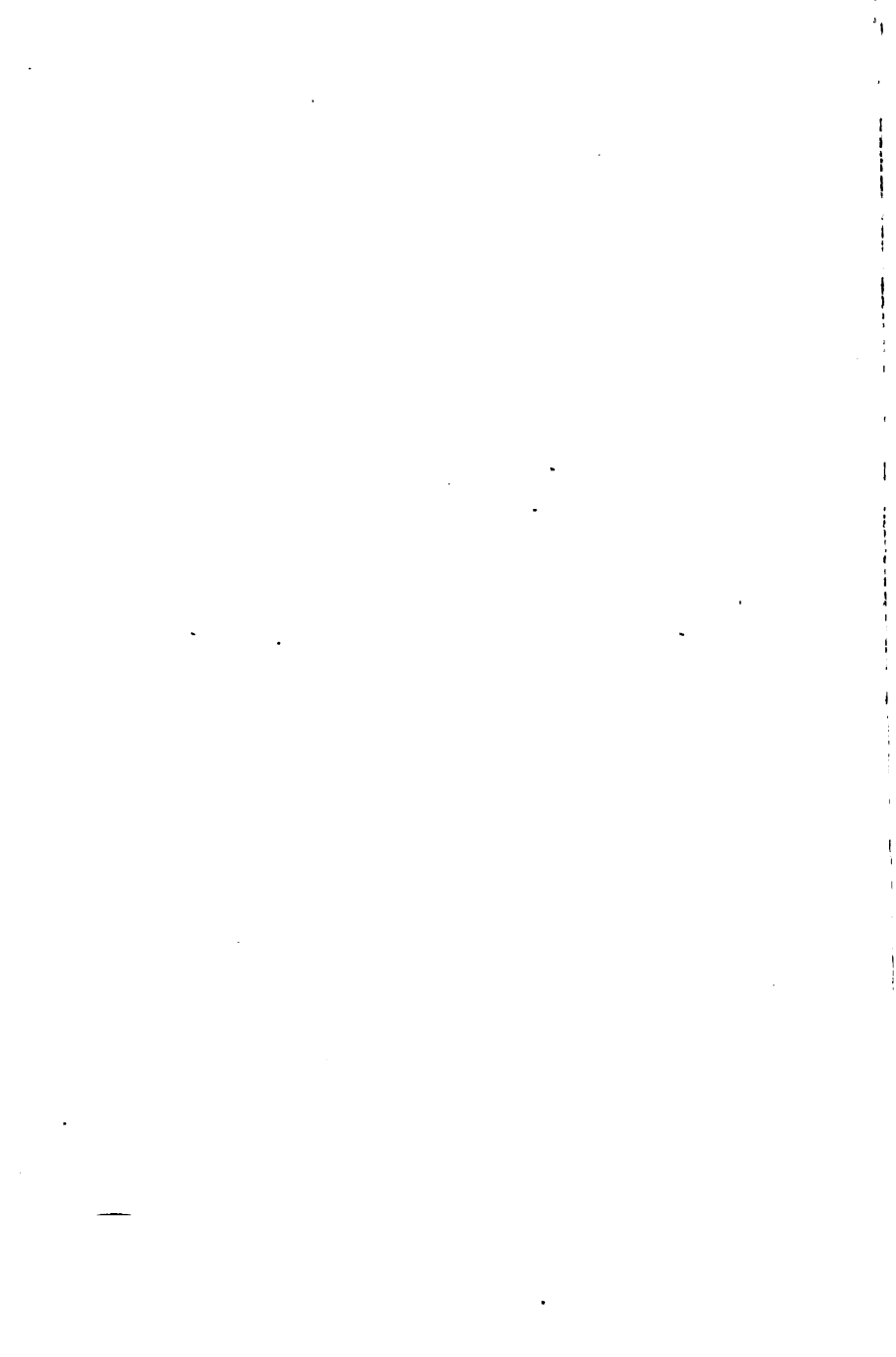
Essex gave a shiver. “Don’t speak of the dreadful things! Do you want me to help about my luncheon?”

“Oh, no; I will see to that. You can run up and put your room in order, and by the time that is done everything will be ready for the island.”

And speaking of that place brings us straightway to the last condition of Essex’s state of “perfect happiness”—the favorite nook in which the new story was to be read. But no description of this nook would ever be permitted—that is, if the young woman herself had any word in the matter—without there being first given some idea of the beau-



THE READING-NOOK ON THE ISLAND.



ties and delights of her home and its surroundings. The home in question was not her birthplace, though it had been that of her father and four successive grandfathers. Essex herself had been born in a rather uninteresting little town, in a far-away Western State, whither her father had taken his bride, expecting to remain only as long as might be necessary for the smoothing out of a business tangle. But shortly after the birth of his little daughter he had died, and his wife, unwilling to break up the little home where her brief, happy married life had been spent, had stayed on until Essex was nearly nine years old. At that time an urgent invitation had come from her husband's younger brother, asking her and her little daughter to come East and make their home with him in the old Thurston homestead in Massachusetts. And so it had come to pass that one summer's day, three years before this story begins, Mr. Owen Thurston had driven over to Eastham station to meet the afternoon train from the West.

When the decision for the removal to the East had been made, Essex, being of that turn

of mind which delights in making its own discoveries, had decided not to draw upon any of her mother's previous knowledge of the unknown uncle and his home, but, as she expressed it, "just let myself be nicely surprised"; and the few minutes necessary for the transferring of the travelers from the train to the old-fashioned carryall had been quite sufficient to convince her that the first element of her "surprise" was likely to prove a most satisfactory addition to her little life. Then had followed the first drive to her new home, the drive which even now, after three years' experience, had never failed to have its charm. Out through the one long, grass-bordered street of the sleepy New England village it led, around a sharp turn into a lane, then down through sloping meadow and orchard, and finally out upon a broad, green marsh, stretching mile upon mile far away to the distant horizon, its surface dotted here and there with tiny marsh islands, fascinating little groups of short, sturdy oaks and pines, raised slightly above the surrounding plain. From one to another of these spots the road took its



way, passing at length over a long, low bridge spanning a creek of apparently greater importance than the numerous other silver ribbons playing hide-and-seek in all directions among the tall grasses of the marsh. On the farther side of the bridge rose an oval green hill, at the base of which the road turned with a gradual ascent to the right.

"Is there any other way to get to our house than over this bridge?" Essex had inquired at this point in that first journey.

"None," her uncle had answered, "unless you prefer swimming or coming from the other side by—I declare, I almost spoiled part of the surprise. And, by the way, if you want a very fine experience, I should advise the covering of your eyes for the next five minutes."

Needless to say, Essex had followed this advice, and had driven the last few rods of the journey with fingers pressed closely over her eyelids. When the carriage had stopped, her uncle had lifted her to what she felt to be the veranda floor, and then turning her quickly about, had given the command, "Now look!"

This was what she saw : a broad sweep of smooth turf, stretching down to where the tops of a line of trees showed how steep was the fall of the land below. But beyond their wind-tossed tops rippled a broad sheet of water, almost inclosed by high bluffs of gleaming white sand ; and in the opening between these bluffs and above their grass-crowned summits, reaching to right and left as far as the eye could see, lay a long band of restless rolling blue, that seemed to melt into the sunset-purpled haze of the eastern sky.

For one moment Essex had stood absolutely motionless, then, turning, had laid her head down upon her mother's shoulder with a long sobbing breath of delight. And then Uncle Owen, quite satisfied with the success of his surprise, had laid a caressing hand on the little arm flung around his sister's neck, saying :

"Ah, I see I was not mistaken. The 'Frigate' evidently knows that she has come at last to her own."

Although Essex's thoughts had been entirely engrossed that first evening by the



"FOR ONE MOMENT ESSEX HAD STOOD ABSOLUTELY MOTIONLESS."



knowledge that the ocean lay before her door, in the days that had followed various other charms of her new home had gradually unfolded themselves. There was the house itself, with its long, low rooms, showing in corner and ceiling the great beams of the massive oak frame, that for more than a century and a half had stood unshaken before the mighty Atlantic winds; next, the great barn, with its lofty haymow and high-pitched roof filled with the nests of innumerable swallows, and the wide doorway, with the date "1775" above it, and the delightful fact in its history, as told by her uncle, that the frame had been obliged to wait for its covering until master and men had finished more important work—which work was the battle of Bunker Hill! Then there was the wide field sloping far up behind the house. And when the grain was ripe, or the daisies in bloom, the little girl always loved to imagine that the waving tops actually brushed the blue sky above them. And the well! Black Judy, no doubt, would have preferred a pump or a faucet, but Essex never grew weary of

the clanking of the wheel in the top of the little house, nor of watching the bucket turn bottom side up as it reached the water's surface, nor of the drip, drip as it came slowly upward, to be brought to the curb at last with a splashing jerk, making necessary a quick jump to one side, or spattered shoes and stockings paid the penalty. But the delight of delights, always excepting the ocean, was the "little island." Essex had espied it in her first outlook from the veranda, and the following morning had made her first voyage thither. From that moment it had become her best-beloved cozy nook. It was just such another little group of rocks, dwarfed trees, and bushes as those which dotted the broad marshland, only this one was set in its rightful element, standing bravely up out of the blue waters of the bay, about a quarter of a mile from the little beach below the house.

## CHAPTER II

**T**HE hall clock was striking nine as Essex bounded down the slope, away through the trees, and out on to the little wharf where her uncle's cat-boat and her own especial little skiff were rocking most invitingly on the incoming tide.

Having stowed her precious new book and a bundle of blue bunting in the stern of her boat, she stepped aboard, and, with the untied rope in her hand, stood waiting impatiently for the arrival of her one passenger.

Said passenger, having been intrusted with the luncheon-basket, had been making his way down the bank in a most careful and dignified manner, and now appeared, with ears bravely erect and slowly waving tail, stepping proudly out along the wharf.

Essex took the basket, stowed it under a

seat, and at the command, "Aboard, Alert!" the great collie stepped into the boat in as neat a manner as that of any accomplished Jack Tar.

Two minutes later, Mrs. Thurston, watching from the doorway above, saw the little craft pull out from the shelter of the shore, and keeping watch till it had vanished around the curve of the island, only left her post when a dark-blue flag with a gleam of white lettering floated gaily out from the slender flagstaff standing up in bold relief against the background of the island oaks and pines.

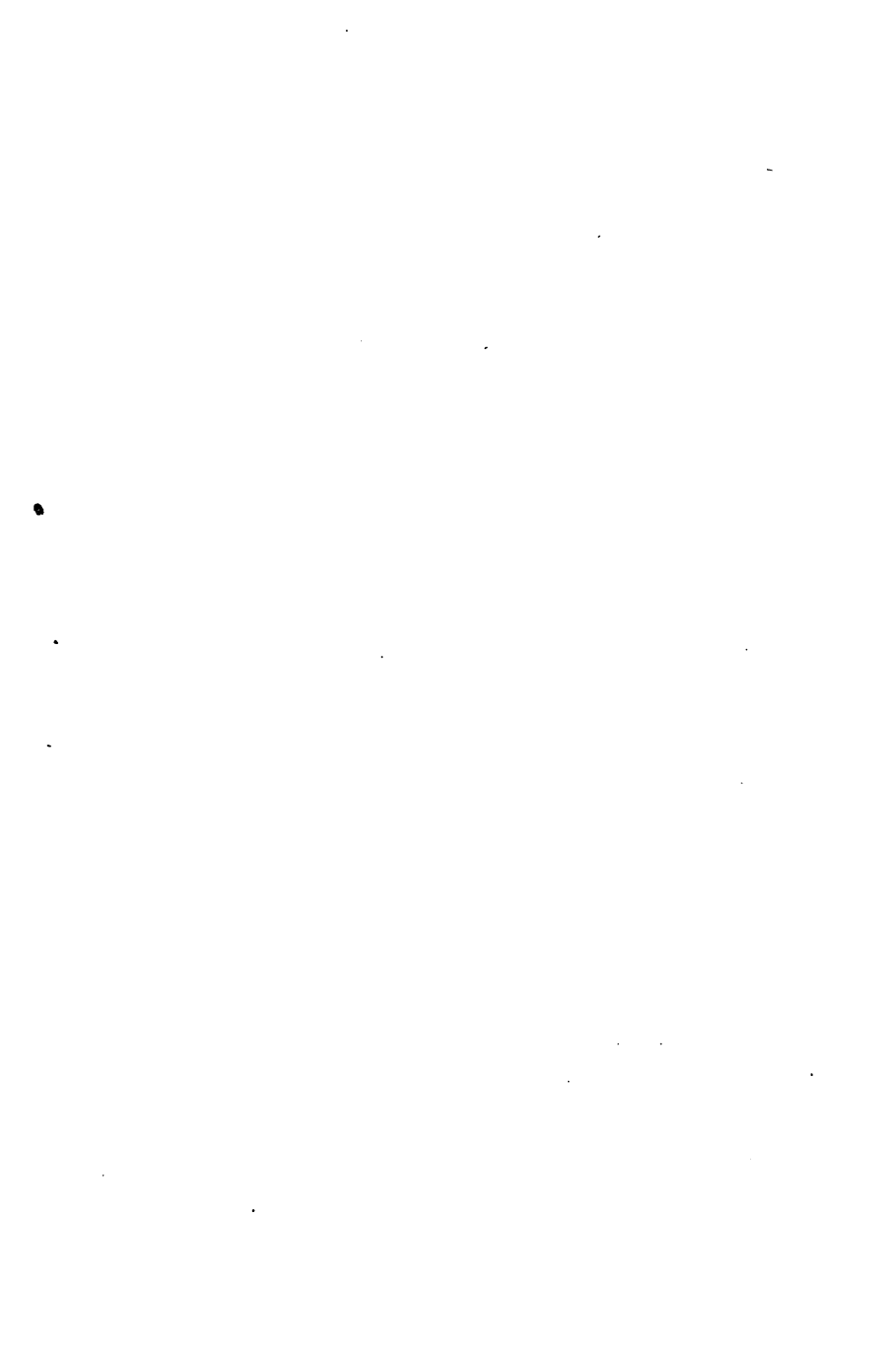
Seated in her arm-chair, formed by two rocks on the seaward side of the island, in a spot where a break in the bushes gave a view out through the bay's entrance to the ocean beyond, Essex speedily left the shores of New England far behind. For had she not joined company with that matchless crew — Barnstable, Griffith, Midshipman Merry, and that noblest but most mysterious of pilots?

The sun climbed higher and higher, while the pages went steadily over, until, at length, a large shaggy paw laid upon her open book





**"THE LITTLE CRAFT PULLED OUT FROM THE SHELTER  
OF THE SHORE."**



made Essex look up to meet the most beseeching expression of which a dog's eyes could be capable.

Springing to her feet, and giving herself a little shake, she exclaimed:

"You poor boy, you *shall* have your luncheon! Bring the basket—now!"

After as rapid a turn as is possible for four legs upon a two-feet-square area, Alert scrambled down the rocks at his liveliest gait, while his mistress descended to the water's edge in another direction in order to secure the large bottle of milk which had been keeping cool in a shady spot since their arrival.

There were also her own tumbler and Alert's deep saucer to be gotten from their special cubbyhole, and by the time she returned, the luncheon-basket and its escort had arrived.

The basket in question had been purchased with special reference to just such occasions as the present. It contained two compartments, and as Essex drew from the left-hand one a queerly shaped parcel wrapped in heavy brown paper, a certain pair of silky ears came for-

ward with a jerk, and a bushy tail commenced a most vigorous tattoo on the ground.

The paper was unrolled. "Chops, Alert; is n't that fine?" Two large crackers came next, followed by a three-inch cube of stale sponge cake.

Essex gave the command, "Now, sir!" and then — well, if any member of the dog tribe would care to engage in a contest as to the quickest time for getting on to four feet, and putting away of two huge crackers and a piece of sponge cake, it is my unbiased opinion that Alert Thurston could give him points and win.

The contents of the right-hand division of the basket gave further proof of Mrs. Thurston's skill as a commissary—a generous supply of sandwiches, part of them filled with slices of chicken and part with Essex's favorite quince marmalade, a small glass jar containing six olives, an unusually plump cream puff, and at the very bottom a little box of chocolate bonbons and a tiny cocked-hat note:

Will Miss Thurston please present my compliments to Master Griffith, if he is not yet a prisoner, and to Mr. Barnstable, unless he is engaged in swimming for his life,

and to that nicest of middies, Master Merry, unless he is being flung overboard, also my always increasing regard and affection to Long Tom Coffin, and to that prince of pilots — by the way, what *is* his name?

The bewildering possibilities suggested in this note caused the luncheon to become a most rapid feast.

When all was finished, with the exception of the bonbons, the tumbler and saucer were washed and replaced in their hiding-place; and with the chocolates in her lap, and Alert curled up at her feet for his afternoon nap, Essex once more lost herself in the pages of her book.

Minutes and hours flew by on wings until, at length, the little reader arrived at the stirring scene where Long Tom, having hurled his reluctant commander into the waiting boat, casts the line loose, saying: "God's will be done with me. I saw the first timber of the *Ariel* laid, and shall live just long enough to see it turn out of her bottom; after which I desire to live no longer."

As Essex read the pathetic words, a blur came over the page before her, and lifting her

head, she sat for a while looking dreamily out to sea. Suddenly, across the water, floated the soft, clear note of a horn. Alert was on his feet in an instant, but his mistress, laying a detaining hand on his collar, remained seated, listening intently in the direction from which the signal had come. Another note, and she was up with a bounce, glancing about for the basket. A third, and stopping for nothing she sprang down the rocks, and in less time than it takes to tell of it, Alert and "The Pilot" were both aboard, and the little captain was unshipping the oars.

Ten minutes later a panting girl and dog came racing up the slope.

Judy, the darky maid, was standing in the doorway eagerly awaiting their arrival.

"What *is* the matter?" demanded Essex, breathlessly.

"Oh, Miss Essex, I so 'shamed. Your ma say to blow two toots on the horn at half-past three, and that would gib you heaps o' time to set the supper-table an' fix flowers for it an' the gentleman's room an' dust it; an' now it's a-goin' on five o'clock—not twenty minutes

'fo' they 'll be here! It was just nothin' but dat ol' chicken jelly—I so 'cited fear it would capswash dat I disremember all about tootin' till just few minutes ago!"

Here a pause was absolutely necessary, and Essex made haste to ask, "Where is mother, and what gentleman do you mean? Tell me quick, and pick nasturtiums while you talk."

"There! I clean forgot you were gone when the telegraph came for Mars Owen from some gentleman in New York, sayin' he 'd be at our station on four-o'clock train, an' Mars Owen hab some business, so he go right after dinner; an' he had n't no more 'n got on the bridge, when ober comes Mars Burton's man with a note sayin' the baby hab crup again, an' want Mis' Thurston to go right ober. An' she say let you be till half-past three—an' den dat chicken!" Judy gave a grunt of disgust. "Anyways, I done make up the bed an' fill the pitcher. Would you hab time to dust it?"

"Oh, yes; but is n't mother coming back?"

"She say she may hab to stay all night, an' if she does, you to take her place, an' not forget dat cream an' sugar go in de cups befo'

coffee, an' when it 's tea, sugar com' first an' cream last."

Poor Essex! Guests, being few and far between at Thurston Island, had always been considered by her as more or less of an ordeal: but this sudden burden of hostess-ship was decidedly overwhelming.

However, the responsibility must be met, and having rapidly laid out the campaign for the short time allowed, she took the flowers which Judy had been gathering, and putting them with those in her own hand, said hastily:

"There, Judy, these will do for upstairs, and now, if you will fill the Wedgwood bowl and bring it up to me, I will dust as quickly as I can. Then, if you can pick some white asters and manage to put on the cloth, I will make the time for setting the table in some way."

The last words came floating down from the stair-head as Essex vanished in the direction of the guest-room.

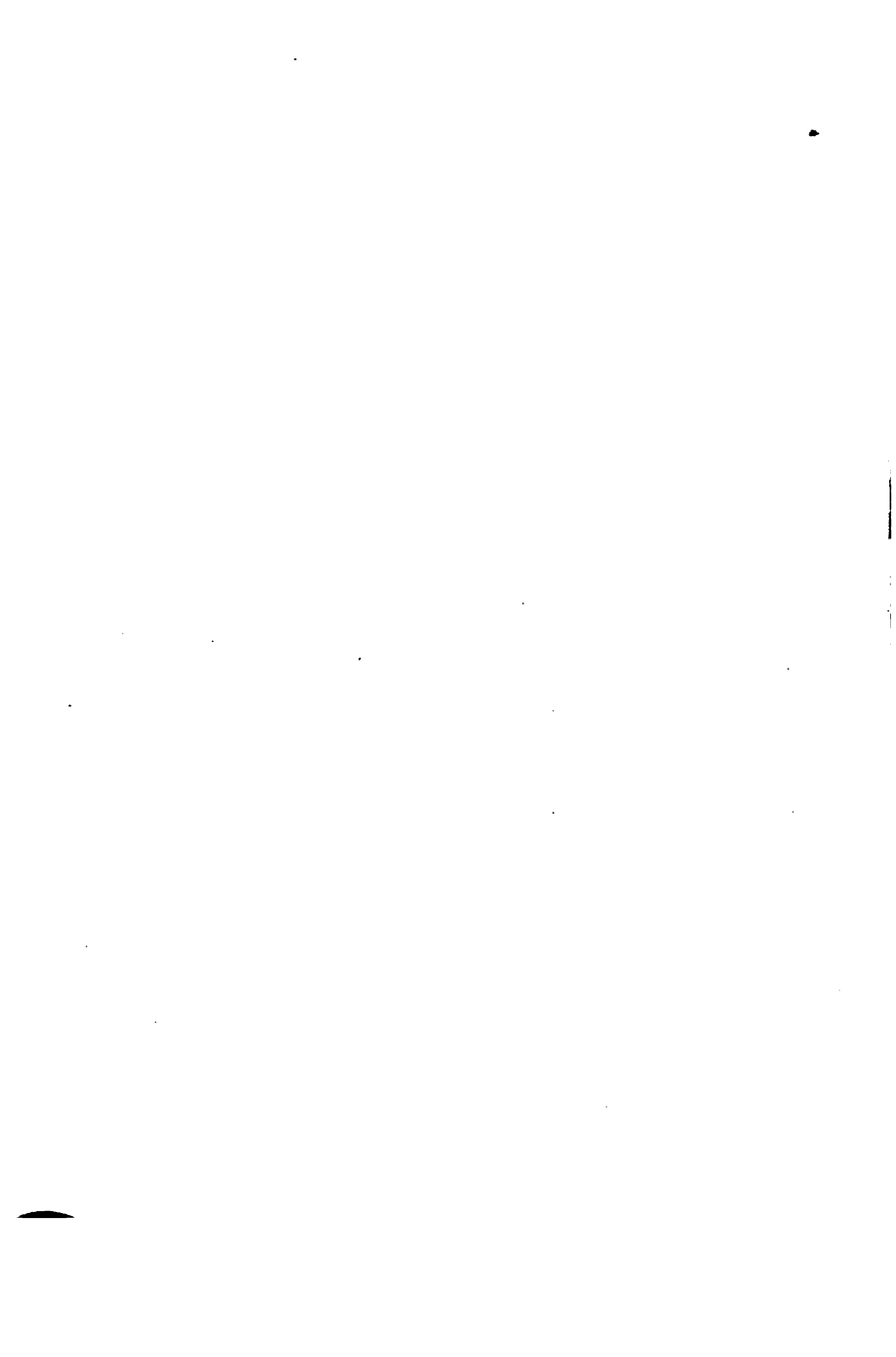
The dusting was well under way when Judy appeared with the water for the flowers.

"La, miss, you fix 'em all tipsy-like, just as





**“‘LA, MISS, YOU FIX ‘EM ALL TIPSY-LIKE, JUST AS YOUR  
MA DOES,’ WAS JUDY’S PROUD COMMENT.”**



your ma does," was the maid's proud comment as Essex set the blue bowl on the table.

"Did mother say anything about my changing my dress?"

"Yes, miss; she say you better put on your Sunday one. I s'pose I disremember to tell you, 'cause I don' see as it makes any difference with those sailor-clothes. They all alike, anyways." And Judy turned toward the door with a sniff of scorn.

There was one subject which never failed to excite the old servant's disapproval, and that was the unvarying style of the dresses worn by her little mistress. Blue serge sailor-suits for the winter, and white duck and piqué, made in the same style, for the warm weather — such had been the established rule since the little girl's baby frocks had been outgrown.

Essex paid no attention to Judy's last remark, but as the latter started down the stairs one last command remained to be given:

"The wind is west, Judy, so you will hear Major's hoofs on the bridge. Let me know

the instant you do, and that will give me just time to change my dress. As for my hair —”

“Le’ me do it, please, Miss Essex!”

“No; I would rather you would pick the asters. I will manage somehow.”

And manage she did, for a quarter of an hour later, when Mr. Thurston and his guest drove up to the door-stone, a little figure was awaiting them there, dressed in the most immaculate of navy-blue suits, while at the back of the smoothly brushed head a peculiarly rampant white bow (it had been tied a minute before on the last step of the staircase) held in place the long, waving tassel of thick golden locks.

“Ah, Frigate,” her uncle called out, “where ’s mother?” While the horse was being tied Essex gave him the necessary explanation. Then followed the introduction.

“Frigate, this is Mr. Bruce—your hostess, Bruce. We will trust that in this case quality will atone for lack of quantity.”

Poor Essex! That remark made her eyes seek the ground, but not before she had seen the courteous removal of the gentleman’s hat

and his respectful expression as he took her little brown hand in his.

"Jim," said Mr. Thurston, as a small darky appeared, "I will drive the horse around to the stable. You can carry the gentleman's satchel to his room."

### CHAPTER III

**N**EVER was a more demure little hostess than the one who led the procession of three to the guest-chamber threshold. But the door having safely closed behind the gentleman, something of the nature of a whirlwind dashed past darky Jim, and went sweeping down the stairs and into the dining-room, where it brought up just short of a collision with Judy.

“Humph, chile, don’ go for to knock me down. Here de posies, an’ I done laid out all the chiny an’ silber. S’pose you hab time, now, to set um round?”

The knives and forks were safely in their places, but the parade of the spoons had barely begun when Essex’s anxious ears caught the sound of an opening door, followed by steps descending the staircase.

Through the slightly opened dining-room door she saw the stranger pass out to the veranda, pause one moment, then stroll away down the slope. Feeling sure that her duty as hostess did not require her to follow him, she breathed a sigh of relief; and then spoons, tea-cups, plates, and napkins positively flew into their places, until at length all was finished, and there had been as yet no sound of returning footsteps.

Essex bethought herself of her book; perhaps there might even be time to discover the fate of dear old Long Tom. With a word to Judy that the table was ready, she skipped gleefully out upon the veranda. Once through the door, she came to a sudden stop. On the farther edge of the veranda floor was seated her uncle's guest, apparently as deeply absorbed in "The Pilot" as ever Essex herself had been.

Roused by the sound of her footsteps, he rose quickly, saying, with a smile :

"I have found an old favorite here; your brother's property, I suppose."

"Oh, no, sir; I have no brother. It is mine."

"Yours? But," turning to the fly-leaf, "this says 'Essex Thurston.'"

"Yes, sir; I am Essex"; then, seeing the gentleman's look of perplexity: "You know, there was no boy, so it came to me, for of course there had to be another."

"Another what?"

"Essex, sir."

"How many have there been?"

"Six; that is, counting the frigate and the county and me."

Evidently the questioner's perplexity was not greatly relieved.

"Which frigate was that?" he asked.

Before Essex could answer, her uncle came around the corner of the house.

"From that last question, Bruce, I should say that you stood greatly in need of enlightenment as to the traditions of our family. Frigate, I will relieve you of the duty, for I believe Judy is anxious to speak with you about something."

"Perhaps you may have heard," began Mr. Thurston, as Essex left the veranda, "that when Porter's famous frigate was built in



Salem, all of the timber used in her construction was contributed from various parts of this county, for which she was to be named. My great-grandfather had taken the greatest interest in her building; in fact, he had sacrificed in the vessel's behalf the two finest oaks on the island; and when it happened that his oldest son was born on the day the frigate was launched, he insisted that the baby should bear the same name. My father was also christened 'Essex,' as was my oldest brother. When my little niece here, his only child, was but two weeks old, he died. Grandfather was over eighty at the time, and his mind was failing fast; but when some one happened to mention in his hearing that it was a pity that the name could go no further in direct descent, his senses seemed to rouse completely. I was in the room, and I remember he started from his chair, crying out: 'I was named for a woman; let the woman be named for me.'"

"What do you think was his meaning?" asked Mr. Bruce.

"He had been a sea-captain in his younger

days, and I fancy had that strong idea so many of them have of the sex of a vessel. Whatever prompted them, his words settled the question of the little girl's name, and I rather think she is as worthy a bearer of the same as could well be found. In fact, I doubt if any inheritor of royal honors was ever more impressed with the responsibility of a title. We have had great and weighty discussions, since she came here three years ago, as to the duties incumbent upon her. And, by the way, if you have any spare information concerning the navy, past or present—"

"Supper is ready, Uncle Owen," announced the frigate's namesake from the doorway, whereupon explanations came to an end, and the three went in to the table.

"Hello!" said Mr. Thurston, as they entered the dining-room, "great-grandmother's silver! what 's that for?"

"September 30," answered Essex, with a shade of reproach in her voice.

"To be sure! I had almost forgotten. You must understand," turning to his friend, "that we have our own methods of celebration here

on the island, one of them being the special use of my great-grandmother's tea-service."

"And the present occasion is my hostess's birthday, is it not?"

"A greater anniversary than that, this young woman would tell you," said Mr. Thurston, laughing. "No less a day than that on which the famous *Essex* herself was launched; let me see, Frigate, how many years is it?"

"Ninety-three, sir," was the prompt reply.

"And do you always receive gifts on your namesake's birthday; for I confess to noticing the date in the front of 'The Pilot'?" asked Mr. Bruce as they all took their seats.

"Only from Uncle Owen," replied Essex, with a grateful glance in the direction of that gentleman.

"By the way, Frigate, I have n't heard as yet whether you and the mysterious mariner had an enjoyable encounter. Did you see him safely through his perilous adventures?"

"No; for the *Ariel* had just struck as I had—when I stopped reading; and please tell me, uncle, *was* Long Tom drowned?"

"I am grieved to say that he was. But how could you manage to break off at that point? As I remember, that was one of the most exciting situations in the story."

"I think it is all very interesting," was the rather evasive reply as the color deepened in the cheeks behind the tall teapot; and the guest, who had observed the slight hesitation in his hostess's former sentence, immediately put the two facts together and very shrewdly drew his own conclusions.

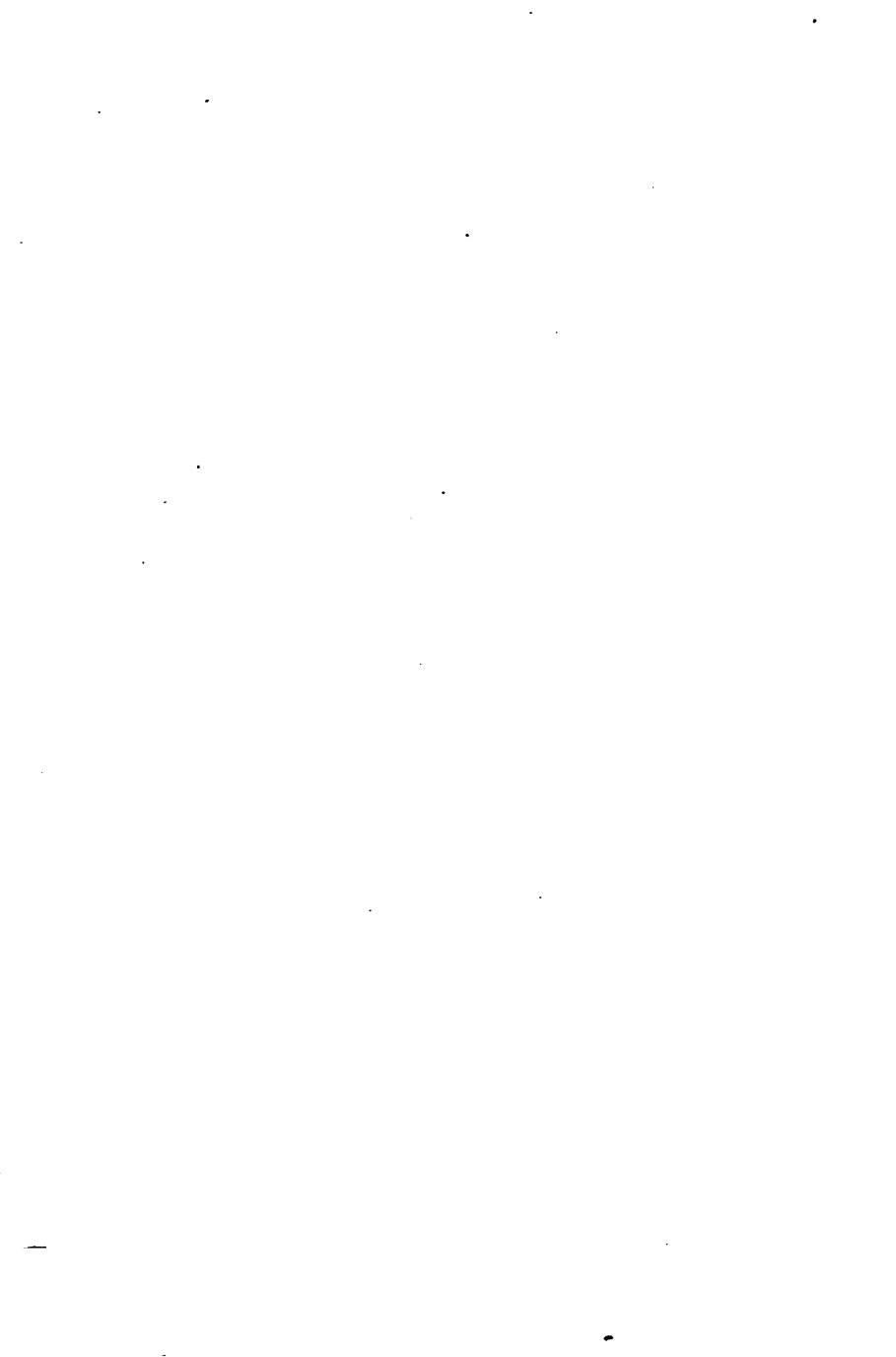
"Mr. Bruce," came the shy question, "do you take sugar and cream in your tea?"

"Both, if you please," was the quiet reply. Then, greatly to Essex's relief, the guest turned to her uncle and began a most businesslike conversation upon stocks, or something equally uninteresting, which lasted until both cups of tea, creamed and sugared strictly in accordance with her mother's parting instructions, had reached without accident their respective owners.

This anxiety being well out of the way, Essex settled herself to the enjoyment of her bowl of brown bread and milk.



**"BOTH CUPS OF TEA WERE CREAMED AND SUGARED STRICTLY  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH HER MOTHER'S INSTRUCTIONS."**



Soon, the conversation, by some mysterious course having come once again to the subject of Grandmother Grey's silver, went round, by way of all tea-services in general, to a particular one which Mr. Bruce had seen recently, which was intended for one of the navy's new cruisers. Hence followed a description of the vessel in question — a description most strangely free from technical expressions, and which so absorbed the attention of the young hostess that she almost forgot to see that the cake was passed at the proper moment.

"Frigate, what is the meaning of that flag?" asked Mr. Thurston as the three came out upon the veranda, after supper.

His niece's glance followed the line of his pointing finger, and saw the flag still waving from the island staff.

"I left it when I came home this afternoon. The horn blew three times, and you know that means for me to leave everything and come at once."

"What was the great necessity for haste this time?"

Essex colored, for she felt Mr. Bruce's eyes fixed upon her face.

"Oh, Judy was in a hurry, that was all."

"And," said her uncle's friend, "I am quite sure that I can give a successful guess at the cause of that hurry, and also why Long Tom's fate was left undecided. Miss Essex, is n't there some way in which I can atone for being such a disturbing element? If there is a boat handy, at least I might bring in that flag."

"Would you really like to go over there?" asked Essex, eagerly.

"Above all things," was the convincing answer.

"Very well," said Uncle Owen; "then, as I neither deserted the flag nor was the cause of its desertion, I think I may be excused from the rescue, and after seeing you off I will walk over to the Burtons' to inquire if they need any further aid."



## CHAPTER IV

“**W**HAT a beauty!” was Mr. Bruce’s exclamation as he caught sight of the shapely little boat awaiting them at the wharf’s end. “Is she your own property, Miss Essex?”

“There, Bruce,” said Mr. Thurston, in a tone of relief, “your reputation is saved. I meant to give you a hint, but I see that none was needed. It would have grieved me to have seen you subjected to the treatment which this young woman serves out to the unfortunates who dare to speak of her boat as *it*.”

“Oh, uncle!” exclaimed Essex, in protest.

“Oh, niece!” mimicked Mr. Thurston. “Shall I cast off? Ah! there comes Alert.”

The great collie came bounding down the bank at racing speed.

Essex turned to Mr. Bruce. "Would it trouble you if we should take him with us? He can make himself very small in the boat, and he does get so jealous if I go to the island without him. Besides—" the speaker hesitated, then said shyly, "I want very much to have him like you."

"What did I say about reputations?" laughed Uncle Owen, casting off the painter.

But Essex paid no attention to the teasing words.

She was, for the moment, entirely occupied with the anxious thoughts that were always present whenever the management of her beloved boat was to be intrusted to a stranger.

One, two, three dips of the oars, and, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, she sank back in her seat at the stern.

She was far too fine a little oarswoman herself not to appreciate to the full the beautifully feathered strokes that sent the little skiff through the water at her swiftest rate.

"Miss Essex, what do you call this cedar sprite of yours?"

"The *Essex, Jr.*"



V

ALERT AND ESSEX.



"Named for yourself; well, that certainly is a novel idea."

"Oh, no, sir; not for me — for the real one."

"The real what?"

"The *Essex, Jr.*; she was one of Captain Porter's prizes."

"But that was n't her real name?"

"No, sir; she was the *Atlantic*, the fastest British letter-of-marque in the Pacific. They changed her name after she was captured. You know they came home in her after the frigate was destroyed."

"Who came?"

"Porter and Farragut and the officers that were left."

"But was Farragut around at that time?"

"Yes, sir; a little midshipman only twelve years old. *Would n't* you like to have seen him commanding a prize all by himself?"

"How did that happen?"

"They captured so many ships that all the older officers were busy taking charge of them, even the chaplain; and so the midshipmen had to serve, and — oh, dear, I forgot! Uncle told me I *must* remember that other people

are not so interested in navy doings as I, so we had better talk of something else."

"But I am quite sure that I am not one of those 'other people.' In fact, I should consider it a great kindness if you would tell me all you know of the *Essex* and her prizes," said Mr. Bruce; but seeing that, in spite of this assurance, his little companion still appeared somewhat disturbed, he looked down at the third member of the party, saying:

"It seems to me that your dog is as fine a specimen of his kind as your boat is of hers."

"Is n't he!" was the emphatic response as Alert's mistress laid a caressing hand upon the smooth brown head resting against her knee. "Uncle gave him to me just a year ago to-day, because mother thought it was best for me not to go to Nukahiva alone."

"And where may that place be?"

"The island where we are going. I named it for the one in the Pacific where the *Essex*—" There was a sudden pause.

Mr. Bruce laughed aloud. "I declare, there seems to be no getting out of the wake of that vessel. We must return to the dog for safety—Alert, I believe you called him?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer, seeming demure enough; but something in the tone of the voice made Mr. Bruce glance up quickly, only to meet a pair of blue eyes positively dancing with fun.

"Now, Miss Essex, surely the usual attitude of those ears suggested his name? Come, I must know, even if it brings me once more under the guns of that frigate."

"He was named for the first British man-of-war captured in the War of 1812."

"And the *Essex* took her?"

"Yes, sir."

There was another laugh; but the island having been reached, a complete change of subject was necessary, for directions had to be given for the landing. Mr. Bruce was delighted with the spot, but the twilight was deepening fast; so the luncheon-basket and flag being secured, the party embarked on the homeward voyage.

As the boat started, Essex began folding up the piece of blue bunting that lay in her lap. The white letters caught Mr. Bruce's eye.

"What part of the navy play do those letters represent?"

The flag was held so that he could read the inscription.

“‘N-u-k-a’—oh, the island’s name. I was about to ask if you had made the flag, but I believe it is no longer the fashion that all little girls should learn to sew.”

“But I did make it all myself,” said Essex, with an air of pride, “though I *do* hate to sew. When uncle gave me the island for my own, and proposed my having a flag and staff so they could always tell when I was over there, mother thought it would be a good plan for me to make the flag myself.”

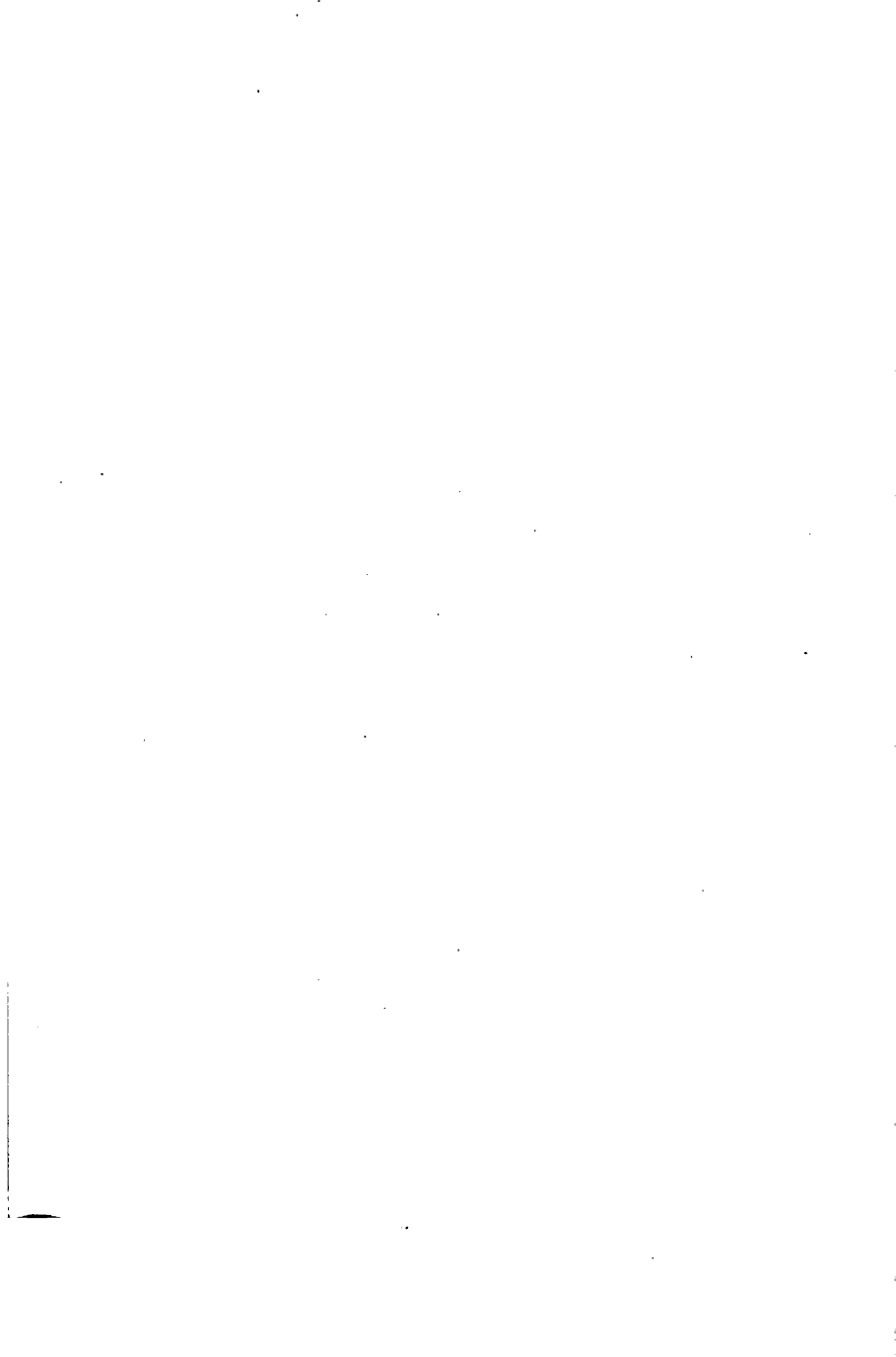
Essex finished folding the flag, and for the next few minutes there was no sound but the soft splash of the oar-blades, the trilling of the water along the boat’s side, and the far-away, muffled beating of the surf outside the landlocked bay. The darkness was gathering and the moonlight beginning to flash in the breeze-rippled water. Mr. Bruce was absorbed in the beauty of the night, and Essex was trying to make up her mind to the point of asking her new friend a special question.

As for the four-footed passenger, he was, for





"THE FLAG WAS HELD SO THAT HE COULD READ  
THE INSCRIPTION."



the time, motionless with excess of pride. Presently a rapturous flop of his tail attracted the oarsman's attention. There sat Alert, his mistress's sailor-cap resting upon his handsome head, the band with the gilded "Essex, Jr.," pulled low over one silky ear, the plummy tail announcing the perfect bliss of the wearer.

Mr. Bruce's "Well, sir!" awoke Essex from her reverie, and there was just time to explain, before the boat glided alongside the wharf, that this was her method of reward for especially good behavior. "Generally," she said, "he barks dreadfully when we only go to the island and right back again."

The *Junior* was made fast for the night, Mr. Bruce hung the Nukahiva flag over his arm, and the three started up the slope. By this time Essex had quite made up her mind to ask her question :

"Mr. Bruce, did n't uncle say that you lived in New York?"

"At all events, such is the case."

"I wonder, then, if you could tell me what the words are on Lawrence's monument."

"Is that in New York?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir ; in Trinity Churchyard, my navy history says."

"I am very sorry I cannot answer your question," said Mr. Bruce, in a tone of real regret, "but I will be sure to look at the monument when I return."

Essex gave a tiny sigh, and the next few rods were trod in silence. Then it was the gentleman's turn to ask a question :

"Miss Essex, if you do not think me too inquisitive, I wish you would tell me how you happen to be so intensely interested in navy affairs. Is it all because of your name?"

"I suppose that did have more to do with it than anything else, though mother says that even when I was a little bit of a girl I liked pictures and stories of ships and the ocean better than any others. But when I grew old enough to know about my name and all the rest, why, I just had to be interested."

"Why 'had to'?"

"Because it is all I can do. Of course naming a war-ship is the only *real* way a girl can have anything to do with the navy, and that could never happen to me, because we

don't know any governor, or Navy Secretary people. I used to wish I could have lived in the war times, when the men and commanders marched through the streets. Clapping and cheering would have been some comfort, you know. Afterward, when I began to study about Captain Porter and my namesake, somehow it did not seem quite fair to study in just that one case which was especially interesting to me, and then, one day, all of a sudden, I happened to think that that was what I could do—know about and remember them, and what they did, and how they did it."

"You mean the commanders?"

"Yes, and the lieutenants and the other officers, and the men, and the ships, too, when I can. After I began there was n't much 'have to' about it, for the stories are *so* interesting. Uncle says I am growing to be a very one-sided little girl; but I think he likes it, too, for he helps me with all my findings out. Don't you think it is a good plan?"

"Excellent," was her companion's hearty

reply; but his only comment went back to the first sentence of what she had said:

"So you think it would be a fine thing to name a war-ship?"

"I do!" exclaimed Essex, emphatically, "next best to bringing her safely through a splendid fight. It would seem to make her belong to me. I often wonder how it would have felt to have christened the *Constitution* or the *Hartford*, though, of course, there is the other side: what if it had been the *Chesapeake* or the *Cumberland*?"

"Frigate, Frigate Thurston!" came Uncle Owen's warning voice, as two figures stepped out from the veranda's shadow to greet the flag expedition.

"Not a word, Thurston," interposed Mr. Bruce. "Miss Essex was only giving me some information by my own special request."

"Very well; I was afraid that she might have drawn you into the momentous discussion upon which we have been engaged for the last two years."

If Uncle Owen had expected any protest to his last remark, he was disappointed, for at

that moment his little niece, standing with her mother's arm about her, was enjoying to the utmost the sensation of feeling the cares of hostess-ship drop from her little shoulders. Only, even before any words of introduction could be spoken, she said quickly :

“Mother, this is uncle's friend, Mr. Bruce : and won't you ask him to stay over to-morrow, so we can have a sail out to sea ?”

A few moments later, when Essex returned from putting away the flag and basket, the matter had been satisfactorily arranged.

“Miss Essex,” said Mr. Bruce, as he took the little hand offered in good-night greeting, “I shall go on that sail to-morrow upon one condition—that the conversation be entirely devoted to the sea and ships and sailors.”

“And fish,” amended Mr. Thurston. “You don't know the Frigate's capacity for cod-chowder ; and just imagine fishing for cod with no mention of their majesties. The thing is not to be thought of for an instant !”

## CHAPTER V

**E**LEVEN o'clock next morning found Mr. Thurston's cat-boat, the *Freya*, rocking jauntily at her anchor, eleven miles out to sea.

Three lines were over her sides, and three hands were eagerly awaiting the twitch that might serve to announce that the chief ingredient of the chowder was assured. But even in the presence of such appetites as can be aroused only by a four hours' dance over white-capped rollers with the keen breath of the ocean salting one's lips, the party of three talked neither of cod nor of chowder.

The great question referred to by Mr. Thurston the night before was in full tide of discussion—the question: Which of the heroes whose deeds shine forth in the annals of the United States navy would one choose to have been?



"I tell the Frigate," Mr. Thurston was saying, "that she has no right to any choice other than Porter. To have captured the first prize from the enemy's navy, and then in one cruise to have cost him fourteen thousand tons of shipping and four hundred men, finishing up the same with one of the most magnificent of sea engagements, fighting, too, with the knowledge of having, by respect to the laws of neutrality, lost the opportunity of destroying your foe, who in his turn was openly disregarding those laws — I will leave it to you, Bruce; should n't you think such a record ought to satisfy any one?"

"But, uncle," protested Essex, "he struck his ship."

"And you don't believe in that proceeding?" asked Mr. Bruce.

Essex looked thoughtful. "I don't think I would say quite so much as that, because I suppose it is the one thing to be done sometimes. Only," and the sailor-capped head gave a most vigorous nod, "I would never choose to have been any one who did it."

"Now, my gentleman," said Mr. Thurston,

"hailed down his colors, but not till he had done a fine amount of the reverse business."

Essex began to dimple.

"Uncle Owen! you have changed again!"

"Well! who turned her back on Perry for Admiral Worden, I should like to know? And from something I heard the other day I judged that even the latter gentleman was beginning to totter on his pedestal."

The color rose slowly in Essex's cheeks. "That was only two, and I am sure my third will be my last; and you have had six Oh uncle, who is the new one?"

Mr. Thurston's eyes twinkled.

"Guess."

"Uncle! it is n't Decatur?"

"What may be your objections to him?"

"But to choose him after Somers and Cushing! You see," turning to their guest, "uncle decided that he would rather have done some brave, daring single deed like the ketch at Tripoli or torpedoing the ram *Albemarle*."

Which explanation being given, Essex looked again at her uncle with reproachful eyes that demanded further information.

"I was reading up Decatur again the other evening," said the gentleman, "and it seems to me he had about as fine a variety in his career as any one could desire: blowing up the *Philadelphia*, commander of the *Constitution* at twenty-five, then the big United States-Macedonian fight, and the putting an end to the Barbary tribute imposition; that last, the collecting damages from the bey and dey, especially strikes my fancy as being a most unique entertainment. I suppose my Lady Frigate objects to the surrender of the *President*; but she will please remember that it was to a whole squadron, not to a single ship."

"It is n't that." Essex paused, then turned impetuously, appealing to the third member of the party:

"Would n't you rather have done one grand, brave thing, and died doing it, as Somers did, than have taken up Barbarous collections and all the rest, and after it all let yourself be killed in a duel?"

"I declare, I had forgotten the duel!" exclaimed Mr. Thurston; "before making my final decision I shall have to consider. Mean-

while, Bruce, suppose you play the game, too. Now! given the standing room, whose shoes would you have chosen to occupy?"

Evidently Mr. Bruce needed no time for consideration. "My choice ran the Vicksburg batteries and swept past the forts of New Orleans and over the torpedoes into Mobile Bay. Who is it, Miss Essex?"

"Farragut!" was the quick, pleased exclamation.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Bruce, "you would enjoy hearing about my one meeting with the great admiral?"

The eager delight in Essex's face was all the assurance needed.

"It was when I was a little fellow about eight years old. I was paying a visit to my grandmother in New York. The admiral always called there when in the city, for on one of his cruises in the East he had known and loved a young midshipman uncle of mine who had died in Hongkong harbor. Late one afternoon I was busily playing in the nursery, when my Aunt Nancy appeared and took me downstairs and into the drawing-room, where

a shadowy figure was standing in front of the open fire. My aunt led me forward, saying, 'Admiral, this is my nephew, Henry Bruce; Henry, this is Admiral Farragut, one of the best friends your family and your country have ever had.' There was something in the way these words were said that has made me always remember them. I also remember the admiral's laughing protest, 'Miss Nancy, oh, Miss Nancy!' as he drew me between his knees and proceeded to send my small soul into absolute rapture by placing his gorgeous hat upon my head, and arranging his sword so that after several frantic pulls I succeeded in drawing it from its scabbard. When he had gone, I trotted back to the nursery as quickly as possible; then, with my face pressed close against the window, made up my young mind that I would rather be the gold-laced gentleman who at that moment was walking across the square than any one else in the whole wide world. So I decided your great question long years ago."

"What a delightful happening that was!" Essex exclaimed.

"Was it not?—only a little more delightful than one which came about over twenty years later."

"Was that a navy one too?"

Mr. Bruce looked mischievous. "I think I will keep that a secret till you have told us your third and very last choice."

"Sure enough, Frigate!" said Mr. Thurston. "You have n't enlightened us. Who is the fortunate gentleman upon whom your choice has fallen?"

A shade of reluctance came into Essex's face; then, much to her delight, Mr. Bruce asked suddenly:

"Is n't the old *Constitution* somewhere in this region? Portsmouth cannot be a great distance from here, if I know geography."

Mr. Thurston laughed. The question evidently brought up some amusing recollection. "Ask the Frigate if she ever went over there. But perhaps it would be better for me to tell the story. You don't mind, little woman?"

"No, sir"; but somehow Essex's line seemed to need her very closest attention for the next few minutes.

"Last summer a party of us planned a trip to Portsmouth by sloop. The Frigate, here, having discovered that 'Old Ironsides' was moored in the navy-yard over there, was all excitement; sat up in the bow the whole way, and positively whistled up the wind for us. But, alas! just as we were rounding into the harbor, she made the discovery, from something said by one of the party, that the famous ship was not, at present, in exactly the condition in which Hull had left her. Consequently when we reached the city, one member of the party absolutely refused to go ashore; and if you would like any description of Portsmouth harbor, except what can be obtained by a direct view seaward, I advise you not to apply to that same person."

"The idea of thinking I would want to look at the *Constitution with a roof over her!*"

The scorn in Essex's voice as she spoke the last words was indescribable.

And now came a new interruption to the conversation, this time from far down in the depths of the sea; for the time being, all questions but that of the nature of the twitch-

ing power at the other end of Essex's line were dismissed.

"I do hope it is n't one of those stupid sea-robins!" exclaimed the little fisherwoman. A sudden gleam of silver flashed up through the green water. The line came in quicker and quicker; one moment more and the chowder was assured.

Essex backed around while her uncle took the fish from the hook.

"I like the waiting, the pulling in, and the eating; but the between part is horrid."

The "catch" having been safely stowed away, Mr. Thurston glanced from his watch to the little pennant waving at the masthead.

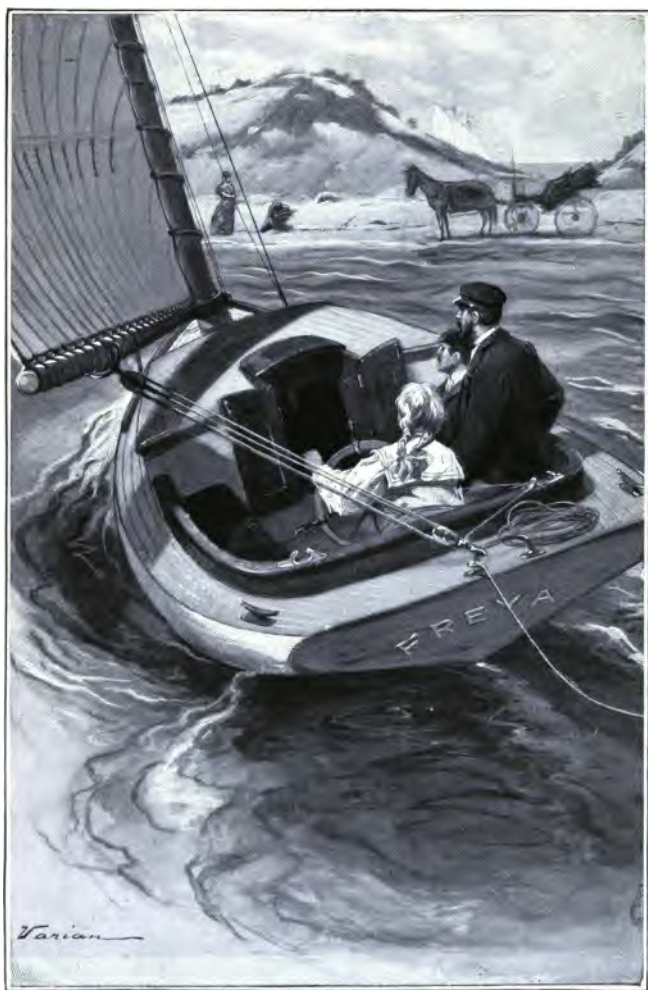
"I told mother to have Jim drive her over to meet us at the Point; and if we are to be there in season, it is high time we were under way."

When all had been made shipshape for the return voyage, Mr. Thurston said quietly:

"Frigate, you may take the wheel."

The words had barely left his lips when his little niece was in at the tiny cabin's entrance and out again. Her sailor-cap was left be-





**"ESSEX SEATED HERSELF, AND GRASPED THE SPOKES FIRMLY  
IN BOTH HANDS."**



hind, and under one arm she carried a sort of box-hassock. Placing this beside the wheel, she seated herself, and grasped the spokes firmly in both hands. After that it was a clear case of "Don't speak to the man—or rather to the little woman—at the wheel."

The gentlemen talked of yachts and their rigging, also of the comparative merits of sloops and cat-boats, subjects which usually possessed the greatest interest for Essex. But, for the time being, her thoughts were wholly centered about two points—the slightest flutter of the edge of the white canvas spreading above them, and the appearing of a certain break in the far-away shore-line that marked the entrance to the home bay. With the exception of a word or two to her uncle in regard to some rearrangement of the sheet, the little helmswoman did not open her lips until the *Freya* was almost abreast of the two figures waiting on the sandy point.

Mr. Thurston pulled out his watch and, smiling at his niece, gave a nod of satisfaction, saying:

"Well sailed, skipper; I doubt if I could have done any better myself."

Not long after, the *Freya*, with furled wings and deserted decks, was rocking lazily at her anchor just inside the bay, while her late passengers, transferred to her little boat, were riding rapidly toward the beach on the crest of a white-capped breaker; and if there is any more enchanting fashion of reaching land, it is yet to be discovered—the hasty shipping of the oars, the exciting wait for the first jar of the keel against the sand, followed by the quick leap overboard, and then all hands on the rope to outwit the back-rushing swirl of white foam when the wave retires.

## CHAPTER VI

**T**HE fishing-party found Mrs. Thurston awaiting them beside a rocky fireplace which had served for many similar occasions. Jim had collected driftwood, so it remained only to light the fire and fill the kettle.

Mr. Thurston having declared that Jim's help was all-sufficient for the chowder-making, the other three adjourned to the beach. Here, Essex, after a whispered consultation with her mother, proceeded to deal out three small crackers apiece. As she offered Mr. Bruce his ration, she felt obliged to apologize for its scantiness: "When you taste Uncle Owen's chowder, I'm quite sure that you will be glad to be as hungry as you possibly can."

Half an hour later, when they gathered around the bountifully spread table-cloth, the

guest, having taken the first spoonful from the steaming bowl before him, looked across to where a pair of anxious eyes were fixed upon his face, and said in his most serious tone: "Miss Essex, it will always be one of the lasting regrets of my life that I allowed myself even one of those small crackers."

The afternoon was somewhat advanced by the time the sea-air appetites were fully satisfied; but the wind was holding in such fine fashion that Mr. Thurston proposed that Jim should drive back the carriage, and that the party should go for another sail, returning at sunset. So once more the *Freya* spread her wings and danced merrily out to sea, behaving her very prettiest, until, just as she was put about for the homeward run, the wind which had blown so blithely all day suddenly turned saucy. The consequence was that the landing at the Thurston wharf was made by moonlight.

Mrs. Thurston hurried immediately to the house to attend to the delayed supper. Her brother remained behind to set the *Freya* in order. Therefore it happened that once again

Mr. Bruce and Essex found themselves walking up the house-slope, and once again the gentleman took the occasion to put a question to his little companion :

"Miss Essex, how good a friend of yours would a person need to be, to be trusted with the knowledge of that third and last choice?"

"I shall be very glad to tell you now," answered Essex. "It was only that I did not feel like talking about him out there in the boat, when everything seemed so bright and jolly. My choice is James Lawrence."

"Do you mean Captain Lawrence who commanded the *Chesapeake*?"

"Yes, sir."

"But if ever a ship was badly beaten —"

"Beaten! Oh, yes, sir — but she never struck her colors; the enemy had to haul them down."

"Well, that fact is news to me. The truth is that I think I used rather to avoid that *Chesapeake* affair."

"That was just like me," cried Essex, eagerly. "I always used to skip the chapter whenever I came to it in my navy history. Then one day I decided that it was n't quite

fair not to try to know and remember about a man because he did not win; so I read all I could find—about his being with Decatur when they blew up the *Philadelphia*, and his taking one of those shaky gunboats across the Atlantic, and the splendid *Peacock* victory; and then when I came to the *Chesapeake* and read how the crew were so miserable and everything was against him, somehow his bravery seemed a great deal finer than if everything had gone right. Does n't it seem strange that those words he said when he was dying were really worth a great deal more than taking the *Shannon* or ten frigates would have been?"

"You think they were?"

"Oh, don't you?" There was a note of anxious protest in the little girl's voice. It would certainly be most disappointing if this new friend were to disagree on this important point. Evidently her cause needed strengthening. "I am sure Perry must have thought so, or he would n't have taken his flag with him when he crossed over to the *Niagara*. But were n't you glad that he went back to



the *Lawrence* for the surrender, and don't you think, if you were fighting on a war-ship and saw the words, 'Don't give up the ship!' would n't they make you feel—" Here Essex came to a stop. It had suddenly dawned upon her that she was doing more than her share of the talking.

But her companion's quiet "Would n't I feel how?" brought the rest of her question with a rush: "Like fighting with all your might till your ship had won, or going down with colors flying, as the *Cumberland* did?"

"Essex," called Mrs. Thurston from the lighted dining-room window, "will you pour the water, dear?" And so vanished the chance of discovering Mr. Bruce's opinion upon the "third and last choice."

Supper was finished. Mr. Thurston had gone to the stable for the wagon that was to take Mr. Bruce to the station. The latter was upstairs, and Essex and her mother were waiting in the hallway to bid their guest good-by.

"Mother, is n't Mr. Bruce a good friend?"

"Uncle Owen has always so regarded him."

"But I meant, a good friend to me."

"What do you consider makes 'a good friend' to my little girl?"

"Why, somebody I can tell things to, and whom I want to have think the same way I do about things that I care about."

A step on the veranda stopped the conversation.

"Margaret," called Mr. Thurston from the doorway, "it is a beautiful night. Suppose I take the Frigate along to keep me awake on the drive home."

There was a moment's anxiety while the mother's protests as to proper bedtime hours and 'sufficient excitement for one day' were being overruled. But Uncle Owen won the day, and Essex went flying up the stairway two steps at a time to fetch her reefer jacket.

While she was absent on this errand Mr. Bruce came down.

"We are waiting for the Frigate," Mr. Thurston explained.

His friend gave a quick glance toward the stairway. "Mrs. Thurston, would you ever lend that little daughter of yours?"

"I never have, as yet."

"I was afraid it was a useless question. The truth is, I have a beloved little aunt, to me the most precious person in the world since my mother died. Whenever I make a very charming discovery, I always long to share it with her, and it is for that purpose I am coveting your little daughter with all my might."

"Does your aunt live in the city?"

"No; I only wish she did; but she is very busily employed in being grandmother and mother to the children of one of her brothers far away out in Wineegan."

"That was Essex's birth State," said Mrs. Thurston, "and I have always intended taking her back for a visit."

"Then perhaps my desire may come true sometime in the future. Ah! there is Miss Essex, so I suppose it is time to say good-by."

During the drive to the station Essex was very silent. Her uncle had advised her taking a nap, in order that she might be prepared to keep him from doing the same when they were returning; but there were no signs of sleepiness in the eyes looking out upon the

far reaches of moonlit marsh. The day had brought plenty of material for new thoughts, and not the least among these was the question whether she would ever be sure that her new friend shared her admiration for her especial hero.

On reaching the station, Mr. Thurston went inside to make some inquiry concerning the trains.

Mr. Bruce, standing on the platform at the carriage-side, prepared to say his good-by:

"Miss Essex, I feel sure that we shall have a chance to finish our conversation some day. In the meantime, though I cannot promise to let Farragut go, I shall make it my duty, and pleasure too, to learn all that I can concerning Captain Lawrence."

"Thank you so much!" exclaimed Essex. "And would you mind telling me now what that other happening was?"

"Surely enough! There was a bargain made, was n't there? Here comes the headlight, so I shall only have time to give you the date, and the rest you can supply for yourself. The happening took place on the



"I SHALL MAKE IT MY DUTY, AND PLEASURE TOO, TO LEARN  
ALL THAT I CAN CONCERNING CAPTAIN LAWRENCE.'"



last day of last month ; you know, it is October now. Good-by ; and shake Alert's paw for me."

The engine came up to the station, and Essex's new friend was gone.

"Now, Frigate," said Uncle Owen, taking the reins in one hand and drawing his little niece close to him, "this is an excellent opportunity for a hearing on the subject of that last hero of yours."

Essex settled herself with a deep feeling of content. When Uncle Owen spoke in that tone there was no danger of "making fun," and she was glad to trust him with precious secrets.

## CHAPTER VII

**T**HE winter following Mr. Bruce's visit to the island went swiftly by, and spring had come — the spring that saw the opening of the great fair in Chicago, and brought the Spanish caravels to the American shores.

Essex had been especially interested in hearing of the latter, and of the great gathering of war-ships which was to celebrate their arrival in New York harbor.

One evening early in April, when Mr. Thurston returned with the mail, she ran to meet him, calling out :

“Is there anything new about the ships?”

“Yes; a distinguished young woman has been asked to review them as they come up the harbor.”

“Uncle — really! Who is it?”



"Well, it is n't Queen Victoria. Here is a letter you can take in to mother. I think probably there is a message in it that may answer your question."

There were three notes in the envelop: one for her uncle, which had evidently been opened; one for her mother, directed in the same writing; and the third bearing her own name in an unknown, dainty, old-fashioned hand. It read:

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIEND (for of course being my nephew's makes you mine as well): Ever since I heard of the branch United States navy station he discovered last fall, I have been wishing that, in some way, the chance might come to me for making the acquaintance of its little commandant. And now, if she will have it so, I think my wish may come true. I am staying here in New York, so as to be present at the big war-ship party that Miss Columbia is to give the last of the month, and I am very anxious to have some young eyes and spirits to help me enjoy it. Do you not think that a frigate's namesake ought to be able to furnish the best varieties of those blessings? And will you please tell your mother that if she will lend you to me for those few days, I will promise to guard you as my own.

With love to her and to your little self, from

MR. BRUCE'S AUNT NANCY.

"Would you like to go, daughter?" asked Mrs. Thurston, as she finished reading the three notes.

"Could I, mother?"

"We will see what your uncle has to say about it."

And when Mr. Thurston came in and announced his intention of accepting the invitation, the cup of his niece's joy was filled to the brim. There was just one question: "Do you suppose there will be many people in the house for me to meet?"

Mrs. Thurston turned to the note in her hand. "Mr. Bruce says that his brother's family is away in Europe, so there will be only his aunt and himself."

With that answer the "cup" overflowed; and the immediate result was a wild sort of war-dance executed for Judy's benefit while the great news was being told.

"Essex," said her mother, the day after the arrival of the invitation, "I was wondering whether you would like to have a new dress. You know, girls of your age rarely wear sailor-suits for all occasions. Of course you

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will give them up sometime, and I thought that perhaps you would like to make the change now."

"Do I look very queer in them?"

"Not the least, in my opinion."

"Then it does n't matter what any one else thinks." . And so the great question of wardrobe, usually of such importance in a little girl's first visit to the city, was quickly settled; or at least so Essex thought. But two days before that on which she was to start for New York she discovered that her mother and uncle had evidently planned otherwise.

Mr. Thurston had been visiting Boston that day, and had returned with the unpleasant tidings that an unexpected business appointment falling due within the next few days would prevent him from accompanying his little niece. However, he had succeeded in finding an escort, an elderly lady friend who would gladly take Essex in charge. He had also telegraphed the state of affairs to Mr. Bruce, who had sent a reply saying that Alert must be sure to come as substitute.

"After receiving that," said Mr. Thurston,

"I decided that it was hardly showing proper appreciation of the honor of the invitation not to have any new decorations. So, as Alert's mistress evidently had no aspirations in that direction, I bought some for him. I hope they will meet with your approval."

The sober expression which had come into Essex's face at the first part of his news changed to one of pleased curiosity as she bent over the parcel which her uncle threw into her lap as he finished his sentence.

The first paper being removed disclosed two packages and a soft bundle. The latter was opened first. Out rolled something long and silken and navy-blue.

"Uncle Owen!" cried Essex. Mr. Thurston regarded the contents with calm interest.

"It hardly seemed necessary to purchase two pairs. To walk on his hind legs is certainly the very least that Alert can do on such a festive occasion."

The second package contained a handsome nickel-plated dog-collar with the inscription, "Alert, Thurston Island, Essex Co., Mass."

"I am so glad you had only his own name,"

was Essex's comment. "If I were a dog, it would hurt my feelings dreadfully to have my collar marked only with my master's name."

Then came the last parcel. "If you think they will make the gentleman too proud," said Uncle Owen, "perhaps some one else might be persuaded to wear them."

The last fold of tissue-paper fell aside. There lay the prettiest pair of slippers that the eyes of a twelve-year-old little maid ever beheld. Not only was the leather of the blackest and shiniest, but each little shoe was adorned with two bewitching rosettes, one on the toe, the other on the strap across the instep, and in the center of each gleamed the daintiest of silver anchors.

At this stage of proceedings words failed to be of use; consequently, Mr. Thurston's neck was immediately put in the greatest peril which had threatened it since Christmas.

At bedtime came a second surprise.

"Look on my bed, on your way to your room," said Mrs. Thurston, with a smile, as she kissed her daughter good night.

Hardly waiting for her candle to kindle,

Essex rushed upstairs, returning presently in as rapid a fashion to ask :

“Mother, may I try it on now, with my new stockings and slippers?”

Permission was given, and in an incredibly short time the silver-anchored rosettes danced gaily into the room.

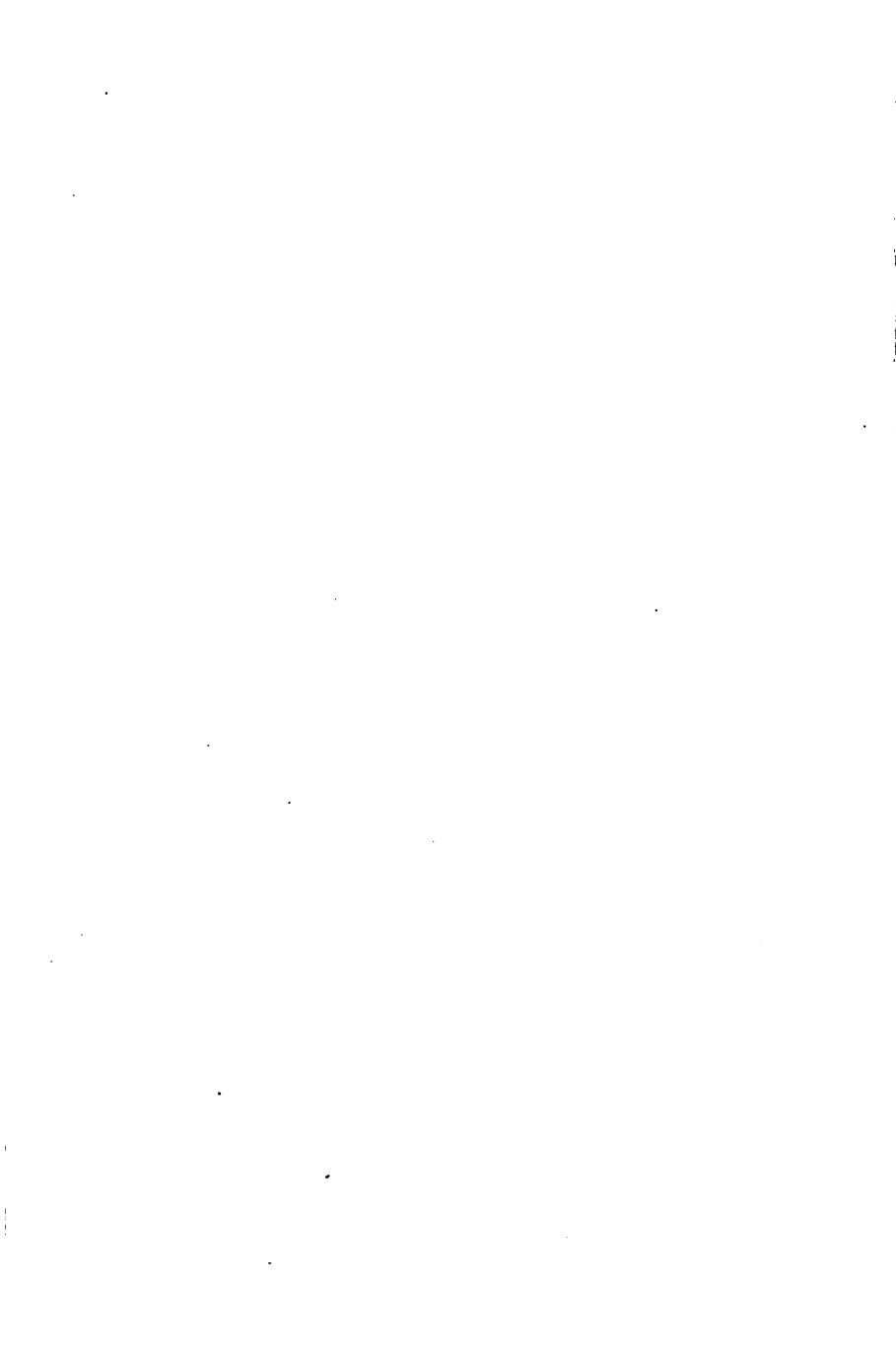
“H’m-m,” said Uncle Owen; “if that is full-dress uniform for a visit to New York, I should say that, on the whole, it seems to be quite a success.”

And yet the new gown was nothing more than a sailor-suit. But the material, in this case, was fleecy white bunting, and the trimming was row upon row of narrow silver braid on sleeves and skirt and collar, while in each corner of the latter, and in the space above its joining in front, was a large star beautifully embroidered in silver thread.

There was no question as to how the new “uniform” suited the notions of the wearer. The little daughter’s “How *could* you think of anything so lovely!” was all the thanks the mother needed.



**"MOTHER, MAY I TRY IT ON NOW, WITH MY NEW STOCKINGS  
AND SLIPPERS?"**





One further preparation for the visit was yet to be made.

"Uncle," said Essex, the next morning, "may I have Jim and the little wagon for an hour and a half this afternoon?"

"Absolutely necessary?"

"*I* think so."

"Very well; I will tell him to be around at three o'clock."

That was all. A wonderful man was that uncle of Essex Thurston's! He had the rare gift of knowing when to grant an unusual request, even if the reason was not forthcoming.

## CHAPTER VIII

**T**HE Boston Express, due in New York at four o'clock, was already fifteen minutes late.

For the last half-hour Mr. Henry Bruce had been pacing the platform of the Grand Central Station, and more than once he had glanced from the open watch in his hand to the far-away entrance of the great car-shed.

At length the watch-cover was shut with a click, as, feeling its snake-like way along the shining rails, the expected train crept slowly to its place. With a final harsh twist of the brakes, it came to a standstill, and the crowd of passengers poured forth. More than half the number had passed before Mr. Bruce caught sight of the sailor-cap for which he was watching.

The heartiest of greetings followed. Then

Essex thanked Mrs. Carson for her care, bade her good-by, and turned quickly to Mr. Bruce.

"This is the check for my satchel, and this for Alert, Mr. Bruce. *Do* you think we could go to him right away?"

"Certainly. Jenkins," handing the first check to a waiting footman, "have this taken to the carriage. Now for the collie; I fear his feelings will be wrought up by this time."

As they approached the three baggage-cars that had come with the train, a sharp bark rang through the station, and from the farthest of the cars there bounded out upon the platform a wriggling mass of tan and white, which, circling wildly about a station official, caused him to whirl as rapidly in order to keep his hold upon the chain connecting him with his lively charge.

"Let him go," Mr. Bruce called out.

With a bound that nearly knocked the official over, Alert dashed forward to where Essex stood. Then, standing erect on his hind legs, he placed his paws on her shoulders, and snuggled his handsome head close against hers.

"He has never done that but once before,"

said Essex, as they walked toward the station entrance, "and that was when mother and I came back after three days in Boston."

"Does the gentleman object to driving?" asked Mr. Bruce, pausing before the brougham awaiting them at the curb outside the station.

"Not at all. But do you think he ought to be allowed in such a nice carriage? Could n't he run alongside?"

There was evidently to be no question of allowing or not, for as Mr. Bruce handed Essex to her seat, Alert took matters into his own hands,—or rather feet,—sprang in after her, and having settled himself close against her knees, laid his nose on the window-sill and, with eyes and ears at sharpest attention, prepared himself for all the new sights and sounds.

"Did Mrs. Carson prove an entertaining traveling companion?" asked Mr. Bruce, as the carriage drove off.

"She slept most of the time."

"And did you keep her company?"

"Oh, no; I had too much to think about."

Mr. Bruce's next question apparently changed the subject:

"Miss Essex, how good a hand are you at the business of early rising?"

The eyes under the sailor-cap twinkled.

"Uncle says a very fine one if there is anything to rise for."

"Would you call a before-breakfast drive to Trinity Churchyard anything?"

The delight in the upturned face made any other answer unnecessary.

"I thought you would want to go there as soon as possible. If you had not made so long a journey, and if Aunt Nancy were not so eager to see you, we might have done it this afternoon. But in the morning it will be quieter. I should not set such an early hour, only we shall be obliged to be aboard the yacht by ten in order to be sure of meeting the ships in the bay."

The delightful hints in Mr. Bruce's remarks quite took Essex's breath away, and the greater part of the drive was spent in a happy dream of the pleasure in store.

At length the carriage turned out of the broad avenue into a large square, and stopped before an old-fashioned red brick house.

The footman opened the door. Mr. Bruce

helped his little guest to alight, and, side by side, with Alert a close third, they went up the wide stone steps.

The stately butler and high-ceiled hall had a somewhat depressing effect upon Essex. Had it not been for the pressure of Alert's head under her hand, she might almost have wished herself at home again.

And then, in the curtained doorway at the left, appeared the dearest little old lady that she had ever seen — such a *picture* of an old lady, with puffs of white hair, and soft pink cheeks, and brown eyes as bright and merry as those of a girl in her teens.

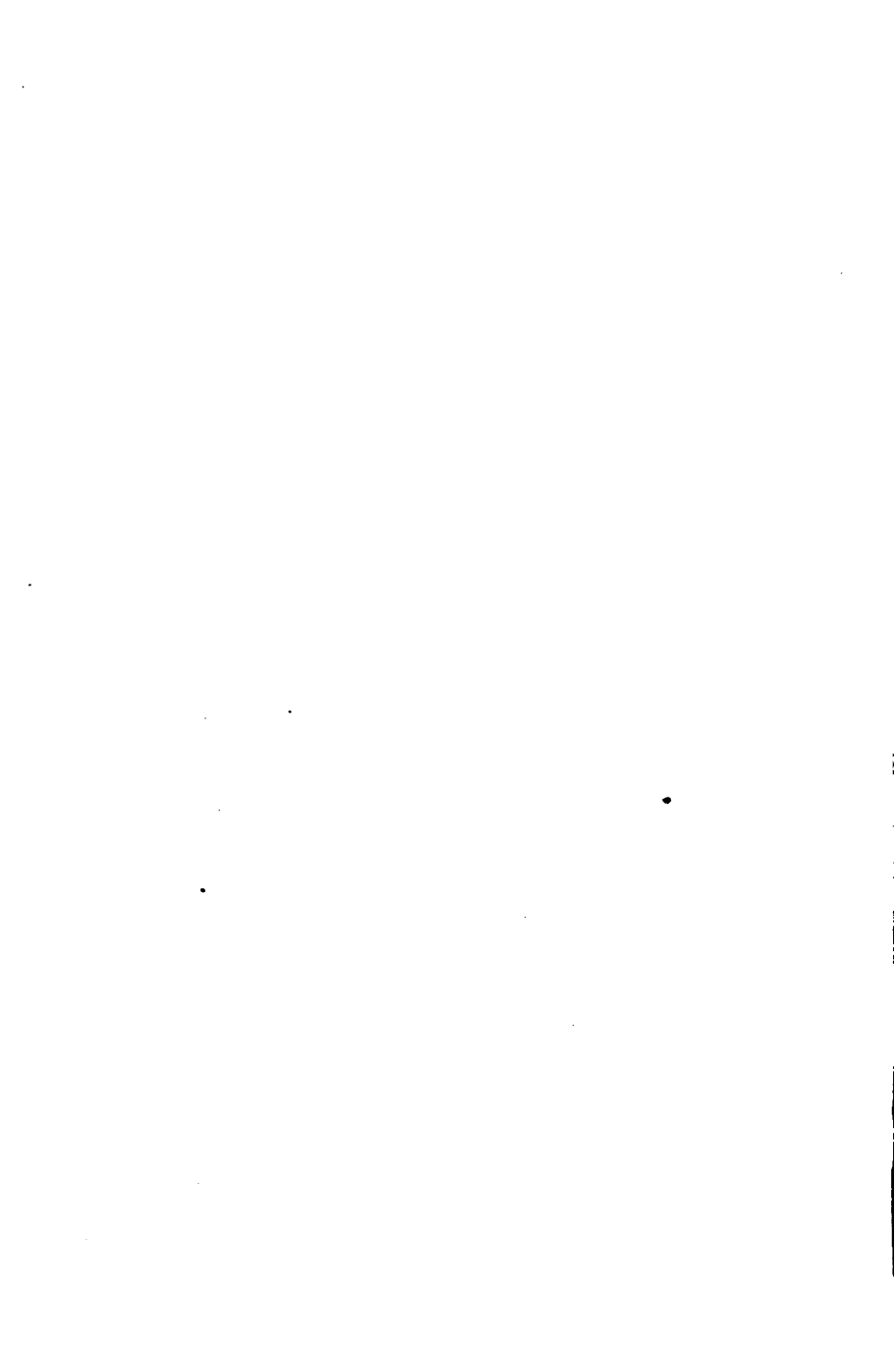
Essex gave one glance into the lovely face lit by the sweetest smile of welcome, then, taking a hasty step forward, found herself held close with a clasp more like her mother's than any other she had ever known.

For a moment she was held so in silence ; then a voice matching the face in sweetness said softly :

“ There is simply no question at all as to the form of salute proper for this member of the United States navy ! ” And Essex, lifting her



**“THERE IS NO QUESTION AS TO THE FORM OF SALUTE PROPER  
FOR THIS MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY!”**





face for the lady's kiss, knew instinctively that she and Mr. Bruce's Aunt Nancy were to be dear friends for always.

At this juncture, guest number two decided that some attention was certainly due a dog who wore a brand-new collar and had just successfully accomplished a first drive in a brougham. Therefore a mildly insistent paw was laid upon one of the arms clasped about his little mistress.

Miss Bruce immediately accepted the hint and shook the offered member with such cordiality that Alert, falling back upon his hind legs, proceeded to offer both paws at once. The greetings being finished, Miss Bruce summoned a bright-faced maid from the rear of the hall.

"Here is Mary," she said, "who will show you to your room and unpack your belongings, and do anything else you may require. Only, remember, there is to be no changing of gowns, or anything that is not strictly necessary. There is hardly an hour before dinner, and I want every moment to-night, so that we may start in as the best of old friends on the enjoyment of to-morrow."

It was a very pretty chintz-decked little room to which Mary led the way, with an open doorway connecting it with a larger one.

"You see, you are to be right next to Miss Bruce," the maid explained, as she opened the satchel and laid the toilet articles on the dainty dressing-table.

In the shortest possible time Essex was on her way downstairs. Miss Bruce was awaiting her by the library fire.

"Sit here, dear," she said, pointing to a little rocker close beside her. "You have been delightfully quick and —" She suddenly stopped. "I am sure I smell arbutus."

"Yes, ma'am; here they are," and Essex laid a little cluster of pink-and-white blossoms in the lady's lap. "I picked them yesterday, and most people think that the ones growing on our marsh islands are sweeter than any others."

Miss Nancy laid the dainty posy against her face, taking a long breath of its fragrance.

"I am quite ready to agree with 'most people.' I wonder if we have any dish pretty enough for them."

"I thought perhaps you would wear them," said Essex, shyly.

"Why, that would be best, would n't it; and will you fasten them in? Only save out two of the prettiest sprays for Henry's button-hole."

As Essex laid the bunch of May-flowers against the mass of white tulle that ornamented the neck and front of the lady's dress, she caught sight of the pin holding the soft folds in place.

It was only a plain daguerreotype, set in a single row of pearls; but the face — that of a boy about sixteen — was of such unusual charm that she speedily forgot all else as she looked at the bright dancing eyes and merry curved mouth apparently just ready to broaden into a ringing laugh.

Miss Nancy's "Well, dear, is there any trouble?" brought her back to the moment's duty.

"Oh, no; I was looking—" Before finishing her sentence Essex gave a quick glance upward. "It *must* be your brother!" she exclaimed.

"It is, dear ; my brother Dick, who died out in China when he was only nineteen."

"Was he the one whom Admiral Farragut knew?"

"Then Henry has told you his story?"

"No, ma'am ; only that one thing, and that he was a midshipman." As she spoke, Essex gave a finishing touch to the flowers, taking, at the same time, another long look at the pictured face. "I do wish—" she began, then suddenly realized that she was about to indulge in her dangerous habit of thinking aloud.

Miss Bruce took both little hands in hers.

"Wish what, dear?"

There was no resisting the coaxing tone.

"I was only thinking that if I were not quite such a stranger, perhaps you would be willing to tell me about him."

"Stranger!" exclaimed Miss Bruce. "My dear little girl, do you think that when two people have thought the same thoughts and cherished the same desires and admired the same heroes, that such a word ought ever to be applied to one of them?"

Essex looked mystified. "I am afraid I do not quite understand," she said. An expression of amazement came into Miss Nancy's face.

"Can it be true that Henry never told you that I have loved navy ships and people and their doings, just as you have, all my life, and that my dearest wish was to name a war-ship? Oh, that boy!" And Miss Bruce shook a threatening knitting-needle at her nephew as he came into the room at that moment.

"Aunt Nancy, I verily believe that you have let the cat out of the bag!"

"Henry Bruce, to think of this child's having no idea what sort of an old lady she was about to visit!"

"But she came," was Mr. Bruce's quiet rejoinder.

"And I had your letter," added Essex.

"It should have been a very different one had I not been sure that Henry had told you all the necessary facts." Then, turning to her nephew, "How did you happen not to do it?"

"No one will ever know what a piece of self-

denial it was. But, somehow, I fancied that it might be rather a pleasant experience for you yourself to make known your navy-blueness to Miss Essex, and," with a smiling glance at the radiantly satisfied expression of the little guest's face, "you will never be able to convince me that I made the slightest mistake."

"Miss Essex," said Mr. Bruce, as they returned to the library after dinner, "I am sorry to say that I shall be obliged to be away this evening. What *will* you and Aunt Nancy find to talk about?"

The only answer given to this question was the happiest of laughs from the occupant of the little rocking-chair, which, it is needless to say, was drawn as close to that of Miss Bruce as could be managed with comfort.

"Very well," said the gentleman, holding out his hand. "Good night; my turn will come in the morning."

For a few moments after he had gone, the two rocking-chairs traveled diligently back and forth to the sole accompaniment of Miss Bruce's knitting-needles.

The silence was broken by the lady's asking:

“How would you like to have the story now?”

There was no need of a spoken answer. The gray-blue eyes, lifted first to the pearl-encircled miniature and thence to Miss Nancy's face, gave more than sufficient assent.

## CHAPTER IX

**M**Y brother Dick," began Miss Nancy, "was a year and a half younger than I; but as I had always been rather frail, and for that reason somewhat backward in my size and doings, we were generally treated as if of the same age.

"Our home, in those days, was down near the Battery, and from the time we were babies we were generally taken there for our daily exercise. Probably it was the sights that we saw from the lovely old park that gave us our first great interest in nautical belongings. At any rate, by the time we were six and seven our knowledge of such subjects was decidedly out of proportion to that of school-books. Perhaps such a state of affairs was hardly to be wondered at when you consider that we had the beautiful bay with its varied craft for a



lesson-book, and the finest specimen of an old Yankee sailor that ever trod a merchantman's deck for teacher. We had made his acquaintance one lovely spring morning when we were playing the 'guessing game,' a brilliant invention of our own. Whenever an incoming vessel was spied far down toward the Narrows, whoever first guessed her kind scored one; that is, if the guess proved to be correct, a mark was set to his or her credit by a very stumpy pencil on a very wrinkled piece of paper carried in Dick's pocket; if not correct, one point was subtracted from the former score. Of course, the excitement lay in delaying as long as possible before risking the guess, and, after that, in the waiting-time till the vessel came into plain view, the latter interval being rarely twice the same, owing to the variety of wind and tide.

"Childlike, we had kept our precious interest to ourselves, and had special terms of our own for describing the different sorts of vessels. We called masts 'sticks,' and sails 'wings,' and talked about 'fronts' and 'backs' in a way that was enough to drive a seafaring man crazy

“On the morning in question I had risked the guess,— ‘A two-sticked one with cross-wings,’— when a kind, gruff voice behind us said gently, ‘I think you ’ll find she is a brig, little lady.’

“Turning, we found ourselves face to face, for the first time, with ‘Sailor Bob.’ That first meeting saw a most rapid advance in our acquaintance, for it happened that our nurse was at the time deeply engaged in conversation with a gardener.

“We first learned the general facts of our new friend’s history—how for the greater part of thirty years he had been ‘before the mast,’ having made four whaling-voyages and sailed four times around the world.

“Unfortunately, before we could gain any particulars, Bridget and the gardener separated; whereupon we were led forcibly away, and, during the whole walk home, compelled to listen to a lecture on the evils of talking with strange men, delivered in the most lively of Irish brogues.

“But in a solemn council held in the nursery window-seat we decided that our new friend

was not an evil to be shunned, and that the case was one worthy of appeal to the highest authority. So that night we waylaid our father on his way to his dressing-room, and laid the facts before him. The next morning, when we reached the Battery, we found him talking with Sailor Bob in the most friendly fashion, and with that hour began a happiness that was to last through our childhood. There was no further talk of 'sticks' and of 'back-and-forth wings.'

"I have always found that the things young folks like to learn they generally manage to acquire in the shortest possible time. It was but a matter of days, or weeks at the utmost, before we were quite at home in the distinctions between ships, barks, sloops, and brigs, and, furthermore, had entered with greatest enthusiasm upon the higher mysteries of their canvas setting. We did not rely upon the city's commerce for lessons in the latter subject. Sailor Bob constructed the most beautiful little models, which, having served to illustrate his lessons, were handed over to become our most cherished possessions.

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"It was not strange that Dick soon decided that following the sea was to be his future career. The only question seemed to be whether the deck he was to walk as commanding officer would be that of a brig or a ship. And then, one bright October day, the question was settled forever. We were standing at our teacher's side listening to some favorite tale, when he started to his feet and looked eagerly down the bay. Then, suddenly lifting Dick and myself to our feet upon the bench where he had been sitting, he raised his cap, and pointing toward a vessel which, with all sails set, was slowly making her way past Governor's Island, he exclaimed, 'There, my hearties, take a good look at her, for if you live to be a hundred you'll never see any frigate better worth your seeing.' So we did as we were told, Dick lifting his little cap in imitation of our friend, thereby winning Bob's kindly nod of approbation. When the ship, which, to be sure, did not look like any other we had ever seen, had passed on her way up the East River, we were lifted down to gain our first knowledge of the United States navy,

with 'Old Ironsides' to serve as an introduction. For it was none other than the grand old queen-frigate herself which we had just watched out of sight. The next day, when we went to the Battery, we found two sailor friends instead of one. Bob proudly introduced to us his old messmate Jake Thomson, who had sailed two voyages with him in a merchantman and then transferred to the navy. Jake, he said, would gladly tell us all we wished about that interesting subject. And, indeed, the new-comer well redeemed his messmate's promise, and we started home that day with our little heads in such a jumble of sloops of war, frigates, and ships of the line that it was only with the greatest difficulty that we were guided to the house and into our afternoon clothes in time to appear at dessert. When our father asked us what we had been about, as usual, I answered first, 'Hearing about navy.' I can repeat the conversation exactly, because years afterwards I found it recorded word for word in my father's diary. 'What is that?' he asked. 'Ships that belong to the President and

his fighting,' was my answer. But Dick corrected: 'Not really to him, but to the country, because that lasts always, and Presidents don't; and it is n't only the ships—it's the men on them, too; and I think I am making up my mind very fast indeed that I shall belong to it when I grow up.'

"A few more talks with Jake Thomson, and the mind was quite made up. Then the question arose whether I could belong to 'it' too. We questioned our friends most earnestly whether 'navy' included sisters, only to meet with the unsatisfactory information that fine dances were given for the ladies when the ship came into port. This made no appeal whatever to my fancy. My dancing-lessons had just begun, and I was deep in the miseries of the first and second positions. But kind old Jake Thomson, seeing my disappointment, drew me to his side, saying that perhaps the little lady would some day have a chance to give the name to a navy ship. Then he proceeded to describe, in his vivid sailor style, a launch and christening he had once seen, and the pretty part the builder's daughter had

played in the scene ; and when he had finished, my decision as to what one act of my life was to be was entirely made."

"Did you ever do it?" questioned Essex, eagerly.

"No, dear; but I came very near to it once." Miss Nancy paused, and for several moments sat silently gazing into the glowing fire. Then, taking one of Essex's hands in hers, she said quietly:

"The rest of the story is sad, little girl. I wonder if you would rather not hear it."

"Will it trouble you to tell it?" asked Essex, anxiously.

A gleam that was not from the firelight shone in Miss Nancy's dark eyes as she answered with a new thrill in her soft voice:

"Trouble! No, indeed; I am only too proud to tell such a story."

"Then—please," said Essex; and the story was continued.

## CHAPTER X

“**W**HEN Dick was eighteen and I twenty, it did seem as if our desires were really coming true. Dick had begged hard to be appointed midshipman when he was sixteen, but father had insisted upon his finishing a certain amount of his studies before he would give his consent. You know, in those days there was no Annapolis, and the midshipmen were appointed directly to the ships.

“Dick’s first cruise was to be aboard the *Yellowstone*, the frigate which was under orders to take out the new commander for the squadron, then in Chinese waters, and to return directly with the officer relieved.

“The only drawback to my brother’s happiness was that there seemed no chance of my wish being fulfilled. But, one week before



he was to sail, something happened in real story-book fashion. A letter came to my father from a friend who, it seemed, had once, as a guest in our house, occupied the room next to the nursery. He had chanced to overhear Dick and me at one of our navy-plays, wherein I was naming the ship. This play, I remember, was possible only twice a year, when our nurse went to visit her family in Jersey City. Her eagle eye being removed for the space of a day and two nights, there was just time for the drying of the wet spot on the nursery floor caused by the breaking of the bottle of water used in the naming.

“ Mr. Dixon’s visit must have been made at one of those rare and delightful seasons. He had never forgotten it, and now wrote to ask if I would care to try the play in earnest and name one of the new frigates just authorized by Congress. A near relative of his had been recently appointed Secretary of the Navy, and in that way he had secured the right to give the invitation.

“ Then arose the question whether Dick would be back in time to witness the cere-

mony. We anxiously studied the records of previous voyages to China, and, as the *Yellowstone* was considered an unusually fast sailer, finally decided that we had a right to hope that things would be as we wished.

"I remember so well how that last week ashore flew by. The frigate was to sail on Monday, and Sunday afternoon he and I went to service at Trinity. Coming out, we stopped beside Lawrence's monument, as we had often done before. Dick lifted his cap and read the inscription through in silence, though I think he had known it by heart long before that day. As we turned away, he said:

"'Even if one never made but a single voyage, it would be worth a man's life only to have belonged to the same service with Lawrence and Ludlow.' Then he opened the gate and we went out; and I have never been there since that day."

For the second time Miss Nancy paused; but it was only a moment before she began again:

"Six months from the day when we watched

the *Yellowstone* out of sight, she dropped anchor once more in the bay, bringing the first news of her own arrival out.

“The report of the remarkable voyage spread rapidly through the city; but there was other news for us. One of the frigate’s officers, Lieutenant Farragut, came immediately to the house to tell us that in the far harbor of Hongkong Dick’s bright young life had come to an end.

“One of the crew, a fourteen-year-old ward-room boy, while aloft in the rigging, had been seized with a sudden dizziness. My brother had gone to his rescue, and, after waiting till the attack had apparently passed off, had succeeded in helping him part of the way down, when the boy fainted, and the two fell to the deck. The latter, being above, had escaped with a broken arm and some bruises, but when they lifted Dick he had gone.

“There was much more that the lieutenant told: how my brother had won the love and respect of the whole crew — things good to know and to think of afterward. But that day, as I sat and listened, with my mother’s

hand holding mine, I felt as if nothing would ever matter to me again.

“When Lieutenant Farragut was ready to go, he handed me a small package. Pinned on the outside of it was a little memorandum in Dick’s writing: ‘Hurry up Nancy’s ribbons, if not aboard by Tuesday.’ They had found the slip in my brother’s pocket, and had been at a loss for an explanation, until James Caxton, the ward-room boy, hearing of it, remembered that when ashore, the day after the frigate’s arrival, he had seen Dick coming out of a silk-weaver’s shop. In spite of his invalid condition, he had begged so hard to be allowed to investigate that the captain had finally given him permission, and he had returned to the ship with the little package which was now passed into my hands. They had allowed the poor boy to take charge of it during the voyage, and he had given it up only when the officer left the ship that morning. I remember feeling as if in a dream as I unfolded the wrappings of thin Chinese paper. There lay my ribbons, made to Dick’s order for the occasion to which we had so

long looked forward. I gave one glance at the silken lengths of navy-blue dotted with tiny white stars; and then everything faded away.

"They said it was the shock of the sorrow.

"The day of the launching had come and gone before I was able to sit up, and it was many months later before I had quite recovered.

"For the rest of her life my mother could never bear to hear of the navy or of anything belonging to it. But it was quite otherwise with my father and myself. We used to spend hours over in Brooklyn at the navy-yard, and kept a record of our vessels and their officers, and when the Civil War came, it seemed as if they were all our especial protégées."

Miss Nancy stopped, looked at the clock, and in one moment was her sprightly self again.

"My dear, my dear! what am I thinking of?—after your long journey, too. You must be off to bed this minute. Where that doggy?"

A muffled yawn came from the rug, :

Alert slowly unfolded himself and stood erect, gazing at his mistress with sleepily reproachful eyes.

Although Essex's head and heart were filled with the story she had just heard, seeing that Miss Bruce evidently wished to change the subject, she said quietly :

"If you will tell me where Alert is to sleep, perhaps it would be best for me to see him safely there before I go to bed."

"Where does he sleep at home?"

Essex hesitated.

"Shall I guess?" said Miss Bruce. "I am sure it is in your own room, and why should it be any different here?"

Alert's mistress looked greatly relieved.

"Would n't you really mind? He is a pretty well-behaved dog generally; still, if he was very sleepy, he might forget and try to find me in the night."

"Then that is settled," said Miss Bruce; "and if you will ring the bell Mary will answer; and when I come up to my room, I will look in to see if you have both been good and gone to sleep."

Having pulled the bell-cord, Essex returned to Miss Bruce's side. It did seem as if something must be said, but no words would come. "Shall we say good night, dear?" And then, as Miss Bruce's soft hand turned the downcast face toward her own, the quivering lips and tear-dimmed blue eyes had said it all.

"My darling," exclaimed Miss Nancy, "I ought not to have told you!"

"Oh, I am so glad you did!" said Essex, with a catch in her voice. "It was such a brave story; only he was—your—brother."

"And for just that reason you must not feel sorry any more. You must only remember, as I try to do, that he had his wish in belonging to the service he thought the finest in the world, and that he left that service in the noblest way a man ever can—giving his life for that of another. And the pride of it all is mine forever, and I am only too glad to share it with you."

Half an hour later, when Mary had gone away with a cheerful "good night," Essex lay in her pretty canopied bed, watching the flick-

ering gleam of the soft-coal fire and dreamily listening to Alert's regular breathing and the dull, mysterious hum of the great city. She was thinking that it would be next to an impossibility for her ever to fall asleep. Well, if she did not, she should see Miss Nancy when she came up to her room; and then she wondered how her mother and Uncle Owen were getting along without her, and then—The next thing was Mary's bright voice saying:

"Good morning, Miss Thurston. It's a beautiful day, and Mr. Bruce says could you be ready to pour his coffee at half-past eight?"

There were but twenty minutes to spare; but with Mary's efficient help the task was accomplished.

"Now, Miss Essex," said Mr. Bruce, as he pulled out the chair before the great silver urn, "I am wondering if you can pour coffee in New York as well as you did the tea on Thurston Island."

With a hasty recollection of her mother's



directions as to the order of ingredients, and a decided feeling of awe caused by the butler's presence at the back of her chair, Essex proceeded to her task.

"I ordered bread and milk for you, Miss Essex, in memory of the island," said Mr. Bruce, as the servant handed him his cup. "You understand that this is only a preface to breakfast; we will have the main meal with Aunt Nancy when we return."

So Mr. Bruce drank his coffee, and Essex ate her bread and milk, and Alert munched his roll; and by the time they had all finished, the hansom was at the door.

The few passers-by in the vicinity of Trinity, that April morning, must have looked with some curiosity at the party that alighted on the pavement before the church. First a pleasant-faced gentleman sprang out, then a huge collie launched himself on to the sidewalk, and last of all came a little figure in a blue sailor-suit, with a large pasteboard box clasped close to the brass buttons of her reefer jacket.

Mr. Bruce ordered the cab to drive around the block, and the three passed inside the gates and over to the plain stone monument that stands at the left of the inclosure.

As they came up to the grim barricade of chain-linked guns, Mr. Bruce lifted his hat, then stood watching the earnest face of his little companion as she slowly read the stately inscription.

"Is there anything about Ludlow?" she asked presently. And they passed round to the opposite side, and read together, Mr. Bruce translating the Latin phrase, the record of the gallant young lieutenant who had fallen at the same volley with his beloved commander.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Essex's companion, as they finished.

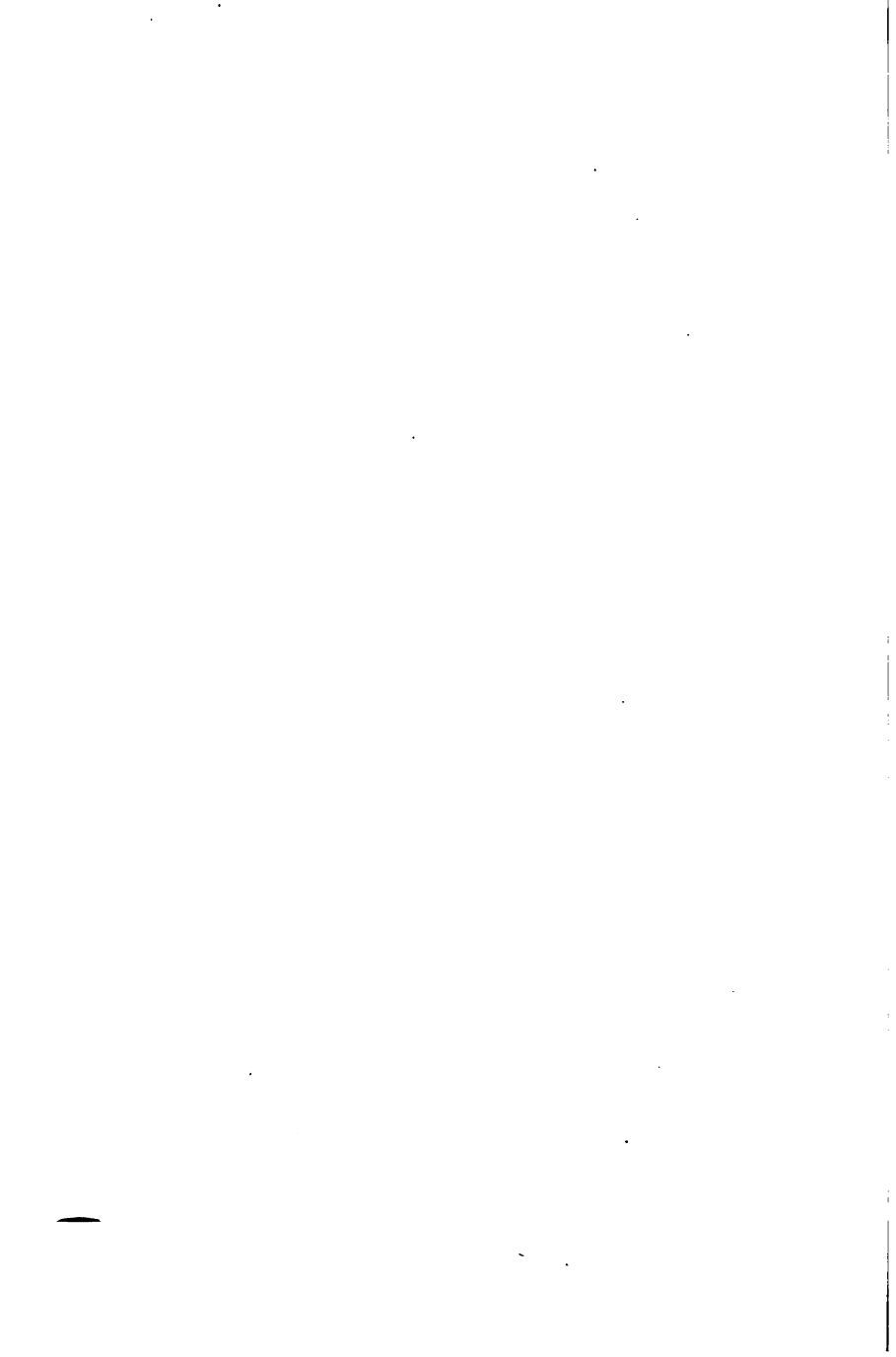
"Yes, sir; only I cannot help wishing—"

"Hold hard to that wish; there is still something more," interrupted Mr. Bruce, leading the way to the eastern end.

A moment more, and Essex Thurston was reading the matchless tribute engraved there—those few short lines that breathe in every



ESSEX AT THE GRAVE OF CAPTAIN JAMES LAWRENCE.



word the dauntless spirit of the man they commemorate :

The HEROICK Commander of the frigate Chesapeake, whose remains are here deposited, expressed with his expiring breath his devotion to his country. Neither the fury of battle, the anguish of a mortal wound, nor the horror of approaching death could subdue his gallant spirit. His dying words were, "Don't give up the ship."

Although he knew Essex must have finished reading the inscription, Mr. Bruce waited in silence till a slight movement caused him to glance down just in time to see the overturning of the mysterious box which up to that moment had been so carefully carried. There was a flash of pink-and-white blossoms, a whiff of delicious fragrance, and a great mass of rosy arbutus lay heaped against the monument's base.

"It was all that I could think of to do," said Essex, lifting a face whose expression Mr. Bruce never forgot. "You see, I have always loved the May-blossoms best of all, and I thought I would like to bring Massachusetts flowers, because it was from there they went out to die."

## CHAPTER XI

“**N**OW, Miss Thurston, I should really consider it a great favor if you would tell me exactly what you think of it all.”

The speaker was Mr. Gillette, the owner of the steam-yacht *Daisy*, which at that moment was pushing her shining black nose through the waters of the Hudson on her way to meet the war-ships in the lower bay.

It seemed to Essex that the question came at the first moment that she had had time to draw a long breath since the party of three had left Trinity Churchyard. On their return, they had found Miss Bruce awaiting them with the news that a message had been received from the yacht that the start must be an hour earlier than according to the original plan. A few hurried mouthfuls of breakfast

had been followed by a rapid drive to the dock, where a boat was in readiness to carry them to the jaunty steam-yacht, lying at anchor a short distance out in the stream.

With the arrival on deck had come rather a trying ordeal for Essex. The rest of the party was made up of gentlemen, all apparently friends of Mr. Bruce and his aunt, for all had come eagerly forward to pay their respects to the lady as soon as she was seated beneath the stern awning.

Essex, standing at Miss Bruce's elbow, shyly acknowledging her own introductions and watching the delight with which the lady's bright greetings and replies were received, had felt a wave of wonder go over her head as to how such a brilliant and sought-after person could have seemed such a perfect companion for her little-girl self.

Then, just as the thought had begun to bring with it a slight shadow of loneliness, Miss Nancy had said to her nephew: "Henry, do take this child forward; the idea of confining her to the stern in this aged fashion!"

But it had been Mr. Gillette who, claiming

his right as host, had taken upon himself to do the lady's bidding. And having placed his little guest directly beneath the bow flagstaff, now asked the startling question, what did she think of it all? With the recollection of the preceding ten or twelve hours crowding fast through her mind, it was no wonder that Essex should hesitate.

"Did n't I understand that this was your first visit to New York?"

"New York! Oh, yes, sir"; there was a tone of relief in the little girl's voice as she turned her attention to the long line of wharves, buildings, and steeples at her left hand. But between that panorama and the spot where she stood lay the broad stream of the Hudson.

To such a lover of waterways as Essex Thurston, the blue river, with its swift-flying ferry-boats, saucy puffing tugs, and heavily loaded excursion-steamers, was of much greater interest than the buildings along its shore.

"I think," was her deliberate answer, "that it is a very fortunate city to have been built by such a river."



Mr. Gillette laughed outright. "Poor New York! See here, Bruce," as that gentleman came strolling forward; "what spell have you or your lady-aunt been casting upon this young woman? I ask for her opinion of the great metropolis of the West, and it seems she only looks upon it as a fortunate occupant of a bank of the Hudson. What you should have said, Miss Essex, was, 'What a fortunate river to flow by such a city!' Don't you know that its original name is dropped when it touches New York, and it becomes simply the North River, the one in that direction from the city?"

Essex's opinion of this piece of information was plainly visible in her face.

"But it is the Hudson," she protested, "and I am quite sure that I shall always call it so."

"In a moment more you will be obliged to call it something else; for there, to the left, is the end of Manhattan, and directly ahead is the lofty Miss Liberty, and over the way is Governor's Island with Fort Columbus; and" — raising his glass — "I believe they are loading the guns. Can those ships be through the

Narrows? Peters," turning to the wheel-house, "full speed ahead!"

With a sudden thrill, the little yacht bounded forward, out past the Battery, black with the waiting crowds, and on into the broad reaches of the bay.

As she came abreast of Governor's Island, a dull boom sounded far away to the southward.

"Fort Hamilton and Fort Wadsworth saluting!" exclaimed Mr. Gillette. "It won't be long now before we shall see them."

"Take my glass, Miss Essex," said Mr. Bruce. "Your eyes can see farther than mine, and I want to prove that my lenses are better than those in Mr. Gillette's field-glass."

On flew the *Daisy*, with the two motionless figures in her bow, each with a field-glass turned toward the far gap in the southern and northern shores.

"Miss Essex," asked Mr. Gillette, "have you ever seen a war-ship?"

"No, sir."

"Ah, then my chances are certainly the best!"

Essex made no response. At that instant two objects had appeared in the vision of her glass, the one dark, the other light, side by side, with masses of smoky haze hovering in the sky above them. She gave a quick little gasp.

"I think—yes, I am almost sure—that there are the cruisers!"

"I declare, Bruce, I believe she's right!"

There was a moment's waiting for complete assurance, and Mr. Bruce's glass was returned with a hasty "Thank you so much!" Then back over the deck flashed a pair of heels as fleetly as if the polished surface were the home slope at Thurston Island.

Alas for the manners which had hitherto been marshaled in such fine array! Forgetful of everything but the news she bore, cap in hand, and with every lock that could be coaxed from the flying braids afloat in the lively breeze, Essex danced up to the group in the stern, crying breathlessly:

"Miss Nancy—oh, Miss Nancy, they are really coming! Mr. Gillette and I played the 'guessing game,' and I won!"

Stern and steady, the double line of magnificent steel monsters came, proudly up the bay.

It seemed to Essex like some strange, wonderful dream — the dissolving view of steep, steel-plated sides, and grim gun-mouths frowning from turrets and casemates; of gold-laced officers standing in motionless state upon lofty bridges, and strange foreign faces peering down over the railings; last, and perhaps most fascinating sight of all, the changing emblems afloat at the sterns, as squadron after squadron swept by: the red cross of England, the black of Russia, France's vertical tricolor, and Holland's horizontal bars, the flaunting scarlet and yellow of Spain, the green of Italy and Brazil — never was a prettier lesson in flag-geography.

And still, at every gap between the foreign vessels, the glances of Miss Bruce and the little girl at her side, like iron to a magnet, went over to where the gleaming hulls of the American White Squadron showed in fairest relief against the green New Jersey shore.

Two thirds of the column's length, the *Daisy* suddenly wheeled about.

"Gillette wants to be up at the Battery in time to see the *Miantonomoh*," explained Mr. Bruce to his aunt. "She is to fire the salute at the unveiling of Ericsson's statue. We shall be able to see the rest of the fleet from there."

So back over her course raced the *Daisy*, coming up just in time to see the low-lying decks and immense turrets of the powerful coast defender emerging from the cloud of smoke following the last of her twenty-one-gun salute.

"You said she was a monitor, did you not?" asked Essex.

She had been standing at the rail beside Mr. Bruce, gazing with all her eyes at the interesting monster resting so easily upon the water.

"Yes, my dear; that is what they call her," was the answer; but it was a strange voice that spoke. Essex had been so deeply absorbed in the *Miantonomoh* that she had failed to notice Mr. Bruce's departure.

Now, looking up quickly, she saw standing at her side the member of the party who, even in the embarrassment of the moment of introduction, had immediately been classed by her as one of "the people who look as if there were stories about them." Broad-shouldered and over six feet tall, with a grand head covered with masses of iron-gray hair, and a face whose expression might have been too stern had it not been for an expression of sadness in the deep-set eyes, the stranger was one to attract attention in any gathering.

Essex faced her present situation with a decided feeling of awe.

"She does n't bear much resemblance to the first of her line as I remember seeing her thirty years ago," said the gentleman.

There was no sign of fear in the face turned to his. "Do you mean, sir, that you saw the real, true *Monitor*?"

"I certainly did; and on her way to meet the *Merrimac*, too. It was one afternoon when I was crossing the ferry between New York and Brooklyn, just around the corner, there," pointing to the southern side of the

Battery. "A large tug steamed down the river, followed by the strangest-looking marine structure that most of us had ever seen. It was the craft afterward known as the 'Yankee Cheese-box,'—Ericsson's much-discussed invention,—on her way, as was then thought, to Washington. A few days later all the world knew what had been shut up in that 'box.' Do you think, my dear, you could tell me what it was?"

The sudden question brought the color to Essex's cheeks. "I am sure, sir, that you know much better than I."

"But it would be most gratifying to me if you would prove your remark true."

Essex felt that there was nothing to do but to undertake the task.

"There was Admiral Worden," she said, thinking her way slowly, "and Lieutenant Greene—and the men—and the guns—what they accomplished, not only driving away the *Merrimac*, but all the saving—"

"What saving?" inquired the gentleman.

"The *Minnesota* and the other frigates and the ships at Annapolis and Washington."

then there was the proving that Ericsson and the navy men who believed in him were right."

"Anything else?"

Essex knit her brows. There *was* something else, but the question was, how to express it. Suddenly a satisfactory way out of the difficulty seemed to present itself. Facing suddenly about, she stood perfectly quiet, pointing in eloquent silence to the noble fleet still passing up the Hudson to its place of anchorage.

"I congratulate you heartily, my dear," was the gentleman's pleased comment. "I shall be glad to feel that some of the present generation realize the debt the world owes to Ericsson. Ah! here is Mr. Gillette. I wonder if he can tell us how soon we are to make a landing."

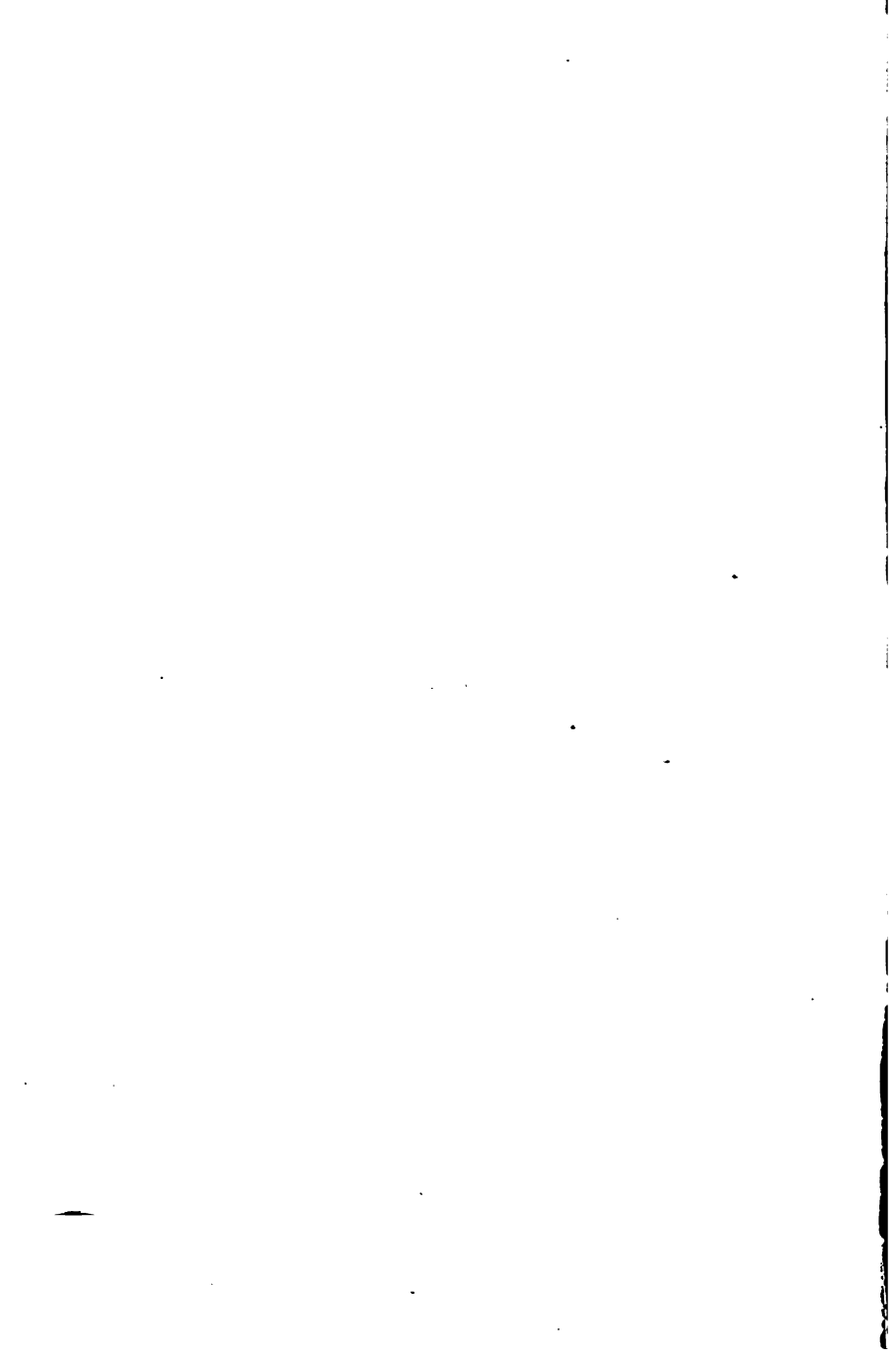
"That depends entirely upon your word, Senator Caxton; I have persuaded the rest of the party to remain for luncheon and afterward to go for a short run up the river; but if you would prefer to be put ashore—"

Essex did not hear the rest of the conversation. The knowledge that she had been





**"SHE STOOD QUIET, POINTING IN ELOQUENT SILENCE TO THE  
NOBLE FLEET STILL PASSING UP THE HUDSON."**



talking with so great a person as a United States senator completely overwhelmed her, and she began to feel decidedly shy and uncomfortable. A beckoning smile from Miss Bruce came as a most welcome diversion, and, with a shy "Excuse me," she crossed the deck to that lady's side.

"What did you and the senator find to talk of?" asked Miss Nancy.

"The *Monitor* — not the *Miantonomoh*, but the *Merrimac* one. He saw her when she started for Hampton Roads. But I do wish I had known about his being a senator before I talked to him."

"What difference would that have made?"

"Why, I should n't have dared to talk at all."

"And that would n't have been best, at all. The senator is very fond of young people. My grandnephews are devoted to him."

"Are you and he quite well acquainted, Miss Nancy?"

"Yes, indeed. He is one of the senators from our State, and lives in the next house to

that of my brother Robert, with whom I make my home when I am there."

Essex wondered if it would be what her mother condemned as "idle curiosity" if she should inquire if the senator always looked so sad. She had made her decision to be on the safe side by not risking the question when Miss Nancy spoke again:

"Essex, in the story I told you last night, do you remember the name of the boy whose life my brother saved?"

"James Caxton," answered Essex, promptly. "Oh," with a quick catch in her breath, "is the senator a relative of that boy?"

"He was the boy himself, dear."

## CHAPTER XII

**D**UNCHING aboard the *Daisy* was a most delightful experience.

With her first glimpse of the bewildering little saloon, with its sea-green and silver fittings, its polished table all a-glitter with glass and silver, having as centerpiece a wonderful trophy-cup filled with a yellow glory of nodding daffodils, Essex knew that her ideas of yachting-meals must needs be enlarged at once. And later on, in the enjoyment of the four hours following the pretty meal, she came very near deserting her preference of sailing as the most desirable means of locomotion.

With the bluest of skies above and of water below, in the teeth of the strong fresh wind, the *Daisy* sped away northward; under the grand overhanging cliffs of the Palisades,

along by the soft outlines of the Croton hills, and out into the broad reaches of Haverstraw Bay; the little yacht then, just in sight of the lofty Dunderberg, poked her saucy prow in at the southern gate of the Highlands, paused, turned on her heel, and started back to the city.

"I am sorry you must miss the finest part of the river," said Mr. Gillette, as the yacht swung around.

But Essex was quite content. "It does n't seem as if there was any more sight-seeing left in me," she confided to Miss Bruce, as they steamed down the river. However, when they came once more to the Palisades, she discovered that she was quite ready to change her mind.

The sun was fast dropping to its setting, and inshore, beneath the tall cliffs of the western side, the river was already in deep shadow. But over by the eastern bank the afternoon sunshine fell in all its brightness upon the two mighty columns of cruisers, with the tiny caravels swinging at their head.

This time, much to the satisfaction of two

of her passengers, the *Daisy* passed directly beside the American ships. The *Philadelphia*, the *Atlanta*, the *San Francisco*, the *Baltimore*, were left astern.

"Do you suppose any of them will ever do any fighting?" Essex asked Mr. Bruce, who was standing between her and his aunt, ready to answer any questions as to the names and classes of the vessels.

"You mean any of our ships?"

"Yes, sir."

"Supposing they should, what would be your idea as to their probable behavior?" he asked in return.

"Mr. Bruce!" There was no mistaking the note of indignation in the little girl's voice.

"So you think there would be no question as to their invincibility?"

"Oh-h," exclaimed Essex, "I beg your pardon. I thought you asked something quite different."

"Then your answer to my first question would have been —?"

"Just as the United States navy always has behaved!"

"But whether they would be victors or not?"

"Why, nobody could tell that, could they?" asked Essex, seriously. "So many things might make a difference. But of course there could be only one answer to the other question."

Mr. Bruce, apparently satisfied, turned next to his aunt.

"What is your opinion of the new navy, Aunt Nancy?"

"Opinion!" exclaimed Miss Bruce. "This is no time for making opinions. The sight of those white beauties has made a girl of me again. And really, at this moment, old lady that I am, I believe I would give anything I possess to have had a hand in the equipment of one of them." As she spoke, so beautiful a flush deepened in the soft cheeks, and the dark eyes flashed in a fashion so enchanting, that for one instant Essex felt as if she stood face to face with the charming young girl Miss Nancy must once have been.

One instant only, then the lady's pretty, low laugh dispelled the illusion.



"The idea of a person in cap and spectacles forgetting herself in such crazy fashion! It is well that no one but you, Henry, and Essex — who, of course, is as foolish as I — heard the nonsense."

But some one else had heard. Essex, happening to turn at that moment, caught sight of Senator Caxton standing a short distance away, and from the expression of his face she knew that Miss Bruce's words had been overheard, and that in some way they had pained him.

With the guilty feeling of having surprised a secret, the little girl immediately gave her attention once more to the river, wishing at the same time, with all her heart, that she might know more about so interesting a person as this senator seemed to be.

It certainly did seem as if "wishes were to be horses" during this wonderful visit, for a short time later, as the carriage containing Miss Bruce and her little guest drove away from the dock, the former remarked:

"Essex, there is a favor I am thinking of asking you to do for Senator Caxton and me;

only, before telling what it is, I want you to know a little more about that friend."

Essex lifted her face from the great bunch of daffodils which Mr. Gillette had thrown into her lap as the carriage had started.

"Miss Nancy," she exclaimed, "how could you have known!"

"Partly because it is exactly what I should have wished at your age, and partly because, after hearing the story I told last evening, it is right that you should hear this one also.

"It begins very much in the same way as that one, with a boy growing up with a longing to go to sea. But in James Caxton's case there was no one to sympathize with the longing, for he was an only child, and his mother had died when he was a baby. His father was one of the most prominent of the merchants engaged in the great Oriental shipping trade here in the city. I have often heard the senator tell of his early recollections of sitting in the window of the office in South Street, watching the busy coming and going across the way, where the great vessels with bowsprits almost arching the narrow street lay at

their wharves, taking on or discharging their interesting cargoes.

"As he grew older he made still closer acquaintance with the ships and their crews. His father encouraged him, thinking that the knowledge gained in that line would be of great use when his son should take his place in the business. But the love of the sea and of sea-going had taken fast hold of the boy's deepest thoughts. When he was fourteen, and his father told him of the plans made for his going away to school, James at once declared his determination to go to sea.

"It was a case of the coming together of two equally strong wills, with the result that Mr. Caxton decided to try the remedy of allowing his son to follow his desire.

"The commander of the frigate *Yellowstone* being in his office one morning, and happening to speak of his need of a ward-room boy, Mr. Caxton offered James for the place, but on the sole condition that no favors whatever were to be shown him. And much against his own wishes, Captain Cross consented."

"Did it cure the boy?" asked Essex.

"That, dear, is what no one has ever been told. Some friends think that after the one voyage he had had enough of the sea, and some that what happened in Hongkong harbor made him look at life in a different light. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that he left the frigate and went to school, thence to college, and afterward into the office.

"My brothers and I used to meet him quite constantly. We always felt that we had a peculiar interest in his life, but owing to my mother's state of health — she never quite recovered from the shock of Dick's death — it was impossible to invite him to the house.

"When he was twenty-eight his father died, leaving him at the head of one of the largest importing houses in the city. He filled the position admirably for two years, and then the surprising news went abroad that he was about to leave the city. Of course, there were many conjectures as to what the next move would be; one rumor was of Australia, one of California, and one of a five years' voyage around the world.

"Of all his friends, perhaps we were the only ones who did not take part in the conjecturing.

"It happened that just at that time the doctor had pronounced the sentence of exile upon my younger brother, Robert, saying that only by such a life as could be spent in the open lands of the West could he hope to regain and hold his health. He was far too weak to make the attempt alone, and the problem of finding a suitable companion had filled us all with dismay. And then, as a solution of Robert's difficulty, James Caxton came forward, saying that he had decided to settle in the West, and asking as a favor that he might accompany my brother. So they went together, and have been the closest of friends, neighbors, and business partners ever since."

"Have they always lived in Wineegan?" asked Essex.

"Yes, dear; and a very good thing it has been for that State.

"It would take too long for me to go into particulars; and perhaps, if I did, you would hardly understand; but you surely know that

there are many other ways in which a man may serve his country besides being a member of the army or navy; and in the list of such servants James Caxton's name deserves a high place.

"His influence has always been one of the strongest in Wineegan; and it has always been on the side of what was good and right. He was one of the first delegation sent to Congress; he has twice been governor, and might be again if he would consent; now he is serving his second term as senator. It is a great record, is n't it? But in no way too great to match the sacrifices with which it began."

"Miss Nancy, are you sure his giving up the sea was a sacrifice?"

"As sure as anything but the senator's own word could make me; and also as sure as I am that whatever were his plans after closing up his business, they were *not* to settle in Wineegan till he heard about my brother."

Essex regarded her daffodils for a moment, then said slowly: "That makes another brave story for me to remember."

“Suppose,” said Miss Bruce, “that you put it in the same list with your especial favorites — the sea ones, I mean; for the senator’s might so easily have been one of that kind. Only you and I know it is all the braver for being as it is.”

## CHAPTER XIII

**A**S the butler closed the door behind them, Miss Bruce placed a caressing hand on each of Essex's shoulders, and looked closely down into her eyes.

"I am wondering if it is n't my duty to order this little frigate close-hauled for the night. Don't you suppose if mother were here she would consider that there had been 'action' enough for one day?"

"Oh, Miss Nancy! I am not one bit tired; at least, my legs are not. Of course hearing and seeing so many new things has made me feel rather 'jumpy' in my mind. But I sha'n't think them all over now. I shall wait till I can do it with mother. Don't *you* like to save your 'thinkings over' for especially nice times?"

"I am afraid my 'thinkings' are not quite



so easily managed," laughed Miss Bruce; "but I want you to promise to do your best at taking a nap. We shall dine an hour later to-night, so there will be plenty of time."

Essex gladly gave her word, skipped up to her room, and straightway prepared to carry out Miss Bruce's bidding. But alas for her fine intentions! Hardly had her head touched the couch-pillows and her eyelids shut themselves down with a snap of determination, when through her mind flashed a disturbing thought. She suddenly remembered that Miss Nancy had never told what that mysterious "favor" was to be.

How could she be expected to rest? But there was her given word; so, selecting the one of her "putting-to-sleep" methods which usually served for such extremely wakeful occasions as the nights before Christmas and Fourth of July, she prepared to do her best. Before the close-shut lids rises a long, low wall broken by two broad gaps. Over the one at the left comes jumping a fat white sheep, which trots steadily along to the break at the right, leaps again, and vanishes just as

sheep number two appears at the left; then comes another, and another, and then—

Essex sat up and rubbed her eyes. Mary, the maid, was lighting the gas. The new white dress lay on the chair beside the fire, and over the low fender were hanging the long silk stockings, while beneath them gleamed the silver anchors on the little black slippers. Mary crossed the room.

"Miss Bruce said, miss, that I was to help you dress as quickly as possible, and as soon as you are ready, you are to go in to her."

It was a very sleepy little head that submitted itself to Mary's offices; in fact, Essex felt as if she were not more than barely awake even when the maid exclaimed:

"There, miss, if you will just take a look to see if everything is as you like, I think that is all."

Essex turned to the glass. There was certainly no fault to be found with the two shining braids, plaited in some mysterious fashion of many strands by the maid's deft fingers.

"It looks beautiful!" was the little girl's enthusiastic comment; "only," as her glance

reached the unadorned tasseled ends, "did mother forget to put in my white ribbons?"

"No, miss; but Miss Bruce directed that I was to tie on no ribbons whatever."

"Oh!" and Essex was wide awake in a moment. "Then that is all, Mary; and thank you very much."

"My dear," exclaimed Miss Nancy, as Essex came forward to where the lady was resting on the couch by her bedroom fire, "will you allow me to say that some one — and I think it *must* have been your mother — seems to have designed the prettiest dress-up sailor-suit that could possibly be imagined. I wonder" — she paused to unroll a little package that lay in her lap — "whether it would spoil the effect to ask you to wear these."

There was no mistaking the white-starred lengths of dark-blue ribbon; Essex drew one quick breath.

"Miss Nancy, they have never been worn!"

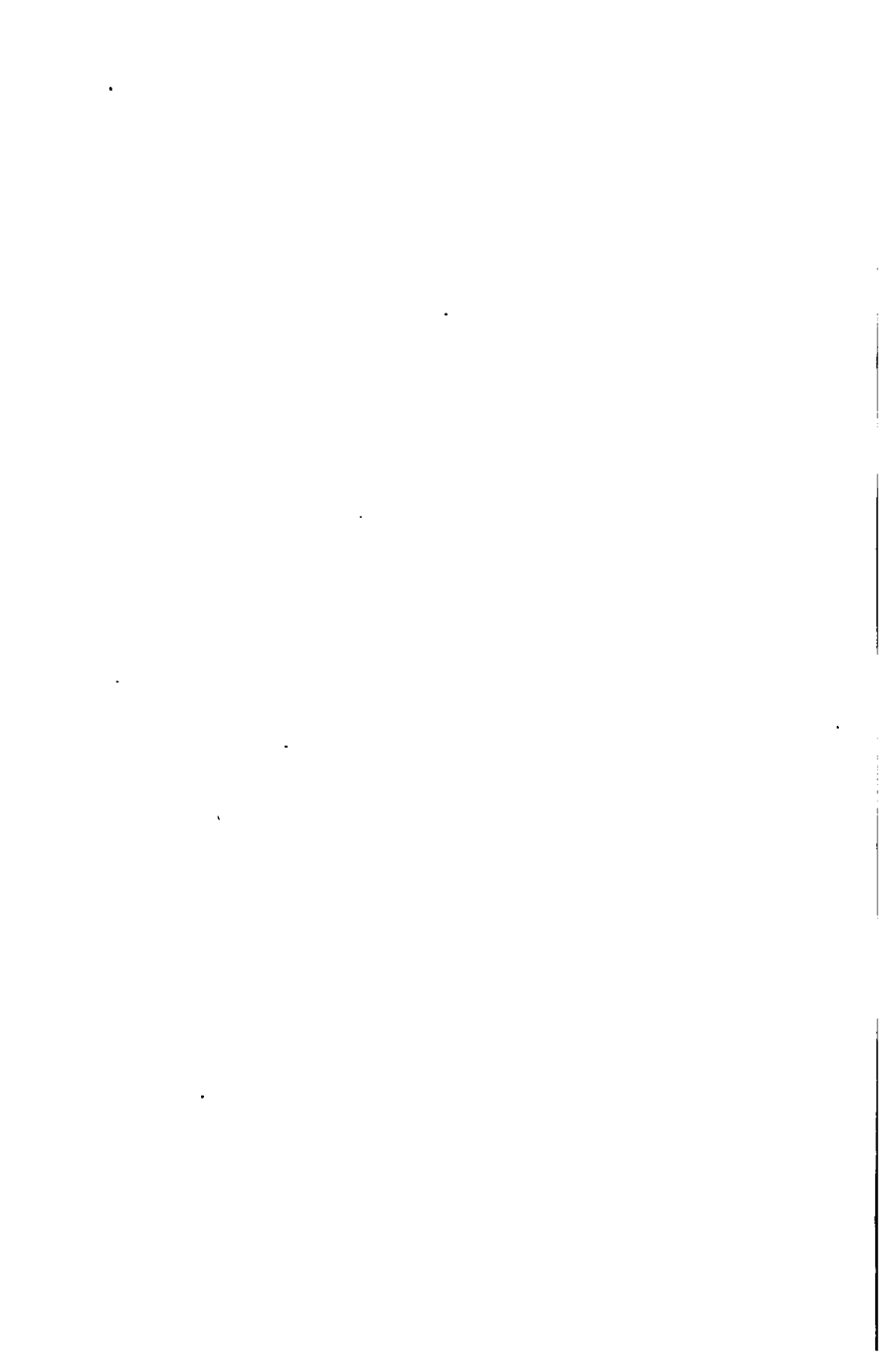
"No, dear; but I have decided that it is quite time that they should be. This is what I meant when I spoke of your doing a favor for Senator Caxton and myself. I have

always felt sure that it would be a pleasure to him to see the ribbons worn; but until now I have never found the person whom I was willing to have do the wearing. See," taking up the ribbons, "there are two widths; the narrow, intended originally, I suppose, for sleeve-ties, will do nicely for the knot under your collar and for your hair; and this wide is in two lengths, one of which will be just right for your sash. You see, little girl, I am taking your consent for granted; but you understand you are to do exactly as you wish."

Exactly as she wished! Essex could scarcely believe her ears. Only last night she had been hardly daring to hope that some time in the near future, when she and Miss Bruce had become old and tried friends, she might, perhaps, be allowed a glimpse of the precious ribbons; but now to be the first to wear them after fifty years' keeping—it was little wonder that her breath should be quite taken away. However, Miss Bruce seemed to understand. Without waiting for a spoken answer, she pointed to her dressing-table, saying:



**"THE FIRST TO WEAR THEM AFTER FIFTY YEARS' KEEPING."**



"Then, if you will bring me my scissors to trim the ends, we will put the 'Union Jack' finish to this little navy-costume as soon as possible."

Very still indeed did Essex stand as the shining silken lengths were tied into bows at the ends of her braids and fastened about her waist. The only drawback to her delight was the fear that it might be a sad experience for Miss Bruce.

But when she faced about for the arranging of the knot beneath her collar, she saw no trace of sorrow in the face so near her own. There was only a beautiful, grave sweetness, that changed suddenly into the loveliest smile as, with a final caressing touch to the carefully tied knot, Miss Nancy leaned forward and kissed the little face above it.

That made everything right, and Essex Thurston went downstairs in the most contented frame of mind. Crossing the long drawing-room, she went on into the fire-lit library.

A slight metallic rattle attracted her attention. Turning quickly, she saw a stranger

step out from one of the heavily curtained recesses—the most gorgeous stranger, resplendent in gilded buttons and glittering epaulets, who bowed low to the little figure standing on the hearth-rug, saying :

“Pardon me for having disturbed you. This weapon seems to be refractory.”

As he bent his head above the scabbard, Essex made an attempt to rally her bewildered wits. Who could the gentleman be, and was his uniform that of the army or navy?

A moment's attention seemed sufficient to adjust the sword; then the officer came forward, and offered his hand, saying :

“Now let us proceed to become acquainted. I suppose you must be one of the Wineegan Bruces?”

“Oh, no, sir,” was the quick reply. “I am only Essex Thurston.”

“‘Only Essex Thurston,’” the gentleman repeated. “I should say that was a statement which needed an explanation. Let me see. I have heard of an Essex earl, an Essex countess, a county, and a frigate, but never of an Essex little girl. I wonder —” Here a swift glance



took in the whole of the little figure before him, from the white-starred ribbons and the symbols on the collar down to the gleaming ornaments on the little slippers. "I declare," he exclaimed, "I believe the frigate must have had something to do with the business! Am I not right?"

There was no resisting the genial face and voice, so Essex shyly gave a short explanation of her name.

As she finished, the officer's courteous "Thank you very much, my dear, for satisfying an old man's curiosity," made her wish that there was some polite way of securing the same service for an equally curious young woman.

Miss Bruce's entrance solved the difficulty.

"Commodore Leigh!" she exclaimed. "This is indeed a happy surprise. I had no idea that you were to be in the city."

"Neither had I, madam, until two days ago. But the ships proved too strong a magnet, and I found myself turning up this morning, just in time to cheer them as they passed up the river. I met Henry an hour ago, and he insisted on my dining here."

"I consider it a most fortunate happening. It seemed strange that we were to have no representative of the navy with us at such a time. Essex, my dear, I am more than glad to have the opportunity to introduce you to Commodore Leigh. If I had only known of it before,"—and here Miss Bruce looked decidedly mischievous,— "I think I should have found the time to tell you another story."

"So Miss Nancy has been spinning yarns for you, Miss Essex. Suppose you confide to me the subject of her latest one."

At that instant, with an appropriateness that made Essex actually jump, Senator Caxton appeared in the doorway.

"Will you excuse Essex one moment, commodore?" And Miss Bruce laid an arm about her little guest's shoulders, drawing her close to her side as she stepped forward to meet the advancing guest.

Essex never knew whether the senator's attention was attracted to the ribbons in some silent way, or whether his keen eyes—Essex's own were fixed on the floor—discovered the fact for themselves. But when at the

words, "My dear, I wonder if you realize what a privilege is yours to hold such a place in Miss Bruce's affections," her hand was taken in a hearty grasp, and she gave one glance into the gentleman's face, in some way she knew without question that Miss Nancy's hopes had all been realized.

As Commodore Leigh and the senator exchanged greetings, Mr. Bruce came into the room, followed directly by the announcement of dinner.

The commodore stepped quickly forward.

"I hope, Miss Nancy, that it will cause no confusion in your arrangements, but as senior officer present, the command of this little craft certainly devolves upon me."

Miss Bruce smiled her assent, and Essex laid her hand upon the gold-banded sleeve. Then, during the short march to the dining-room, she addressed all her powers to the difficult task of keeping the new slippers from fairly dancing with excitement from the proud experience of keeping step to the rattle of a real sword and scabbard.

As was to be expected, the conversation

during dinner was principally of war-ships and their management and construction. Essex found it very interesting but somewhat difficult to understand. However, by the time Miss Bruce rose she thought she had at least succeeded in learning the distinction between barbettes and turrets.

At Miss Nancy's suggestion, Essex bade the gentlemen good night before leaving the room, coming last to the commodore, who held the portière aside for Miss Bruce and herself to pass.

"Miss Essex," he said, as he took her hand, "did you ever hear what the sea-serpent said when she caught sight of your famous namesake rounding the Horn?"

"No, sir."

"Snuffers and extinguishers! There go the lights of London town!"

Essex's soft laugh showed her immediate appreciation of the remark; but Mr. Bruce said:

"One moment, Miss Essex; I refuse to laugh where I do not understand, so I demand an explanation."

"I suppose," said the little girl, "that it was because she captured so many whalers. Uncle told me that he once read that Captain Porter dimmed the lights of London for two years."

"Just so," was the commodore's comment. "And now good night. I am very sorry that my duty will take me elsewhere to-morrow, but Friday morning I shall return to my present command, and she will please understand that no orders but mine will hold good for that day. Do I make my meaning clear?"

"Yes, sir," was the demure answer given by the lips, but the blue eyes supplied most satisfactory emphasis as Essex turned and followed Miss Bruce from the room.

At the foot of the staircase they paused, and Miss Nancy stooped to say good night.

"I hope, dear, that the visit is proving all you expected."

"I was just thinking," said Essex, slowly, "that I should n't wonder if this is going to be the happiest day I have ever spent."

Essex's verbs were rather perplexing.

"'Going to be'?" questioned Miss Bruce.

"When I have told mother about it, I mean. Of course it could n't be *the* happiest till she has had something to do with it; could it?"

"Certainly not; and when an even happier day comes, I hope the mother herself will be with you."

What could it possibly be?

But Miss Nancy only smiled into the wondering eyes. "There are chances for a great many kinds of happiness ahead when one is only twelve," she said.

And with this happy prophecy sounding in her ears, Essex went upstairs to bed.

## CHAPTER XIV

**T**HE next morning brought two surprises. The first was a somewhat disagreeable one at the hands of the weather. The northwest wind of the day before, with its attendant clear skies and sunshine, had suddenly changed, and in its place had appeared a dull easterly downpour. Surprise number two, however, more than made up for any mere weather disappointment.

All the while Essex was dressing, Alert had conducted himself in a strangely restless fashion. The instant the door of the room was set ajar, he pushed himself through, and was off down the stairs in great, tumbling bounds. As he reached the lower floor two short, sharp barks brought his little mistress flying at his heels. Knowing that that greeting was for only one member of the family, she gave one glad cry, "Uncle Owen, when did you

come?" and rushed in at the dining-room door, straight into her uncle's arms.

"So the Frigate has n't drifted away from her moorings as yet! Mother seemed to be somewhat disturbed for fear you might set sail with the other ships; so I came down to act as anchor."

"I am so glad you did!" exclaimed Essex. "There is so much to see and remember. Now we can do it together, and mother will be sure to hear about everything."

In spite of the inclement weather, one o'clock found the whole of Mr. Bruce's party gathered on the *Daisy's* deck. To be sure, the rain had made rather an unpleasant change in the appearance of the river. The water, which had been so brilliantly blue the day before, was now a sullen gray, and the crowds of sight-seers, in their wet-weather uniforms of dark cloaks and umbrellas, lent a decidedly somber aspect to the decks of the excursion fleet and the river's banks.

But the cruisers, wrapped in shifting clouds of smoke and mist, were more fascinating than ever.



There they swung, the two mighty columns, decked with their lines of fluttering flags, spars and rails, manned by row upon row of sturdy tars cheering to the echo as the *Dolphin*, with the President and his party aboard, passed through the noble avenue to the grand, incessant music of the deep-mouthed guns.

At length the smoke of the last salute floated slowly away, disclosing the President's boat at anchor at the head of the column. In an instant the water about her was dotted with boats and launches carrying the various officers of the fleet to pay their respects.

"I sha'n't wonder any more why people want to be President," remarked Essex to her uncle. "I always used to think of him as just living in the White House and signing bills. Now I know better."

Later, when the commanders began their return to the ships, Miss Bruce called Essex to her side.

"Mr. Gillette would like to have us come aboard again this evening for the search-light exhibition. Do you think it would be too much for you?"

Essex sent a beseeching glance in Mr. Thurston's direction.

"What time did you go to bed last night, Frigate?"

"Ten o'clock, sir; but I had taken a nap, and if we go ashore quite soon, I am pretty sure I can do it again."

That evening, as Essex came up the side ladder, Mr. Gillette called over the rail, "How about that nap?"

"I did it," was the triumphant reply, "but it needed a great many sheep."

"Sheep!" exclaimed Miss Bruce. "What does the child mean?"

"I know," said Mr. Gillette. "Do yours come through a gate?" he asked Essex.

"No, sir; over a wall. Oh," drawing a long breath, "see that!"

Sheep, gates, and walls were instantly forgotten; for out of the darkness beside them there shot up into the sky a seemingly endless spear of white light. An instant later a second lay athwart the first. One moment more and the whole air was quivering with the dazzling beams. The magical display

lasted for an hour, the great rays focusing now on the wooded Palisades, now on the lofty buildings of the city; then dropping with gleaming swiftness upon one and another of the cruisers, bringing out every detail — masts, spars, hull, and guns — with merciless distinctness.

When the time came for going ashore, Essex made a shy attempt to express her gratitude to the yacht's owner.

"Wait till some summer day," he said, lightly touching the lettered band of her cap, "and then we will let your namesake pay any debt that may be due the *Daisy*. Your uncle has been giving Peters directions how to find Thurston Island. Do you think you will recognize the *Daisy* when she appears?"

FRIDAY morning, true to his word, Commodore Leigh arrived, and greatly to one person's delight, he was wearing his full uniform.

Something in the expression of Essex's face as she bade him good morning made him ask quickly:

"Has Miss Nancy been spinning you any more yarns?"

"Only one, sir."

"One too many, I have no doubt," said the officer, shaking his head in Miss Bruce's direction as that lady came into the room.

"Good morning, Miss Nancy. How are you feeling to-day? Equal to scrambling up the sides of caravels and cruisers?"

"Quite equal," was the ready reply, that caused Essex to execute a skip of delight.

"Very well," said the commodore; "then my program for the day is as follows: This morning we stay on land and observe the Jackies try their legs in a shore parade; next, luncheon; and afterward Miss Essex and I will betake ourselves to our own element, and shall be most happy to act as convoy to any friends who may care to accompany us."

And so began the third day of delights.

First came another lesson in geography, a race chapter this time, for the sailors and marines of ten nationalities marched in peaceful parade through the streets of New York that spring morning. Rank after rank, they filed

by — tall Russians, hearty, red-cheeked English, fair-haired Germans, and the dark, short-statured races of the South. And among them all, even to the eyes of an unprejudiced observer, were none to excel those in the service of the United States.

When the first line of her country's sailors swung into sight, Essex felt that the occasion demanded some demonstration beyond the mere waving of a handkerchief.

As the foremost rank came opposite the Bruce home, two heads were instantly uncovered, and side by side on the balcony railing rested a commodore's gold-laced chapeau and a little blue sailor-cap till the last Yankee tar had marched out of sight.

After the parade came a luncheon at the commodore's club, followed by an adjournment of the whole party to the river.

"I suppose the least we can do for Columbus is to give him our first attention," said their host as he conducted them aboard the little steam-launch that had been awaiting them at the wharf. So a few moments later they climbed over the steep sides of the *Santa*

*Maria*, and, as Miss Bruce said, "right into the Middle Ages."

Standing in the interior of the little vessel, with her tiers of decks, tiny cabin, and baby pieces of ordnance, they all realized that no finer object-lesson could have been devised to teach the greatness of the spirit that in such a ship had dared to meet the perils of an unknown sea.

After the visit to the caravels the launch took them for a cruise through the squadron, Miss Nancy having expressed a desire to see the cruisers from the water's edge.

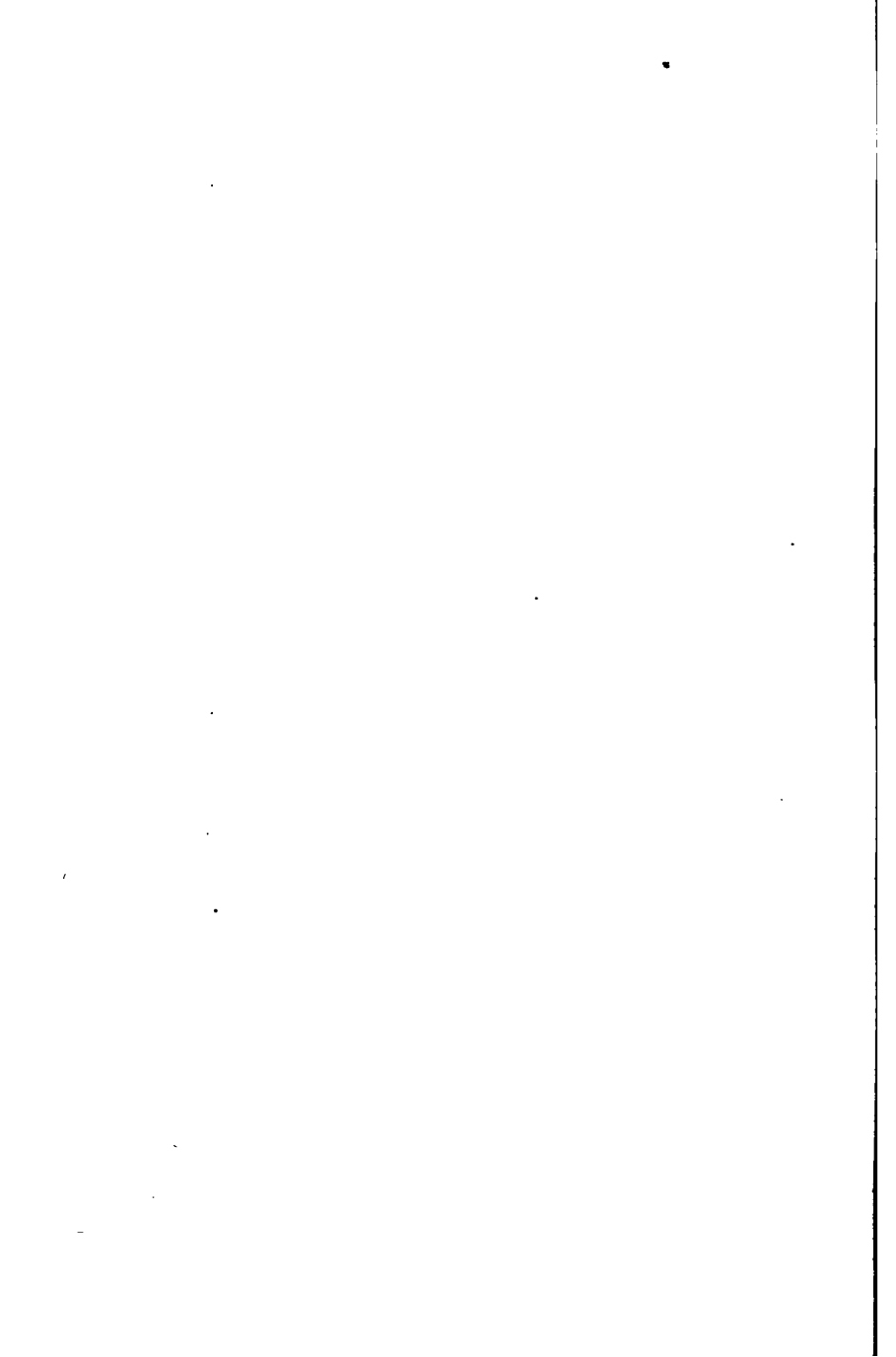
This being accomplished, the commodore, taking two papers from his pocket, said:

"I have passes here for the *Blake* and one of our own cruisers. As I understand that neither Miss Bruce nor my command here has ever been aboard one of our new navy, there is, of course, no question as to their destination and mine. If we do our duty, I am afraid there will hardly be time for a visit to both vessels; but if you gentlemen prefer, we will put you aboard the British ship first."

However, neither Mr. Bruce nor Mr. Thurs-



**"RIGHT INTO THE MIDDLE AGES." ON BOARD THE  
COLUMBUS CARAVELS.**





ton was willing to break up the party, so the order was given to head for the American ship. As they stepped out upon the deck, and the three gentlemen faced the colors at the stern, and lifted their hats, Miss Bruce and Essex exchanged glances of mutual understanding. Both were thinking of the story Miss Nancy had found time to tell, the day before, of a gunboat running the rebel batteries at Vicksburg, and a flag that had twice been shot away, replaced the third time by the hands of the commander himself.

Then came the study of the cruiser. No multiplication of details could daunt Essex's enthusiasm. Her expressed desire had been "to see and hear about everything that it would be possible for twelve-year-old people to understand," and the commodore did his best to gratify her wish.

The officers and their duties, the various batteries, the method and distance of their fire, were all extensively discussed. And into every corner of the ship where strangers were ever invited to go the blue sailor-suit found its way.

Long before the little student's curiosity was satisfied, Mr. Bruce and Mr. Thurston had rejoined Miss Bruce. That lady, having discovered an acquaintance among the ship's officers, had established herself on deck, after a survey of the principal points of interest in the vessel.

"Am I tiring you, sir?" Essex had asked anxiously, when her uncle had suggested that, in his opinion, the commodore had more than filled his contract.

"Not one atom," had been the officer's cheerful reply.

So the questions had begun again, this time in regard to steering, a most fertile subject, and one which was still being discussed when the two returned to the deck.

"Well, dear, are you satisfied?" asked Miss Nancy.

"Yes, I think so — as much as the commodore could possibly do to make me; but there is so much to hear and know; and I should like to have gone up in the military mast and into the fighting-top."

"Frigate," said her uncle, "if your wishes

are beginning to soar in that reckless fashion it is more than time we should get you ashore."

As they started up the wharf, Essex turned for a last long look at the ships, then, with a deep sigh, took her place at Miss Bruce's side.

"Is that the result of regret or satisfaction?" asked Miss Nancy.

"Both, I think: part for the people who have n't seen them, and part for myself because I have. Miss Nancy?"

"Yes, dear."

"What *does* make grown-up people so kind to little girls?"

"Will you consider it very unsatisfactory if I say that you will probably have to wait some time for an answer to that question?"

"How long should you think?"

"Probably until you are one of the grown-up people yourself and make the acquaintance of some very fortunate little girl."

Even with this explanation Essex remained somewhat puzzled. But she decided to put both question and answer aside to be talked over with her mother, and to devote all her

energies to the full enjoyment of every remaining moment of her visit.

Much to her delight, the commodore returned to dine with them, and once again she had the pleasure of wearing the "Union Jack" ribbons. And when, at the end of the evening, Miss Nancy untied the bows, and Essex laid them lovingly away in their sandalwood box, the lady said gently: "Some day, little girl, they shall be your very own."

## CHAPTER XV

**T**HE great clock on the main building of Acton College struck five. With the last stroke there was a rush of the crowd of girls who had been strolling about the college yard waiting for the sorting of the evening mail.

Essex Thurston, glancing down from her open window, half caught the infection, and started from her chair, then reseated herself, and turned once more to the open pages of her Horace. What was the use of going down, when it rarely happened even once or twice during a term that the evening mail contained anything for her? She had read but a line or two of the ode for the next day's lesson, when an unfamiliar word, apparently holding in its troublesome self the meaning of the entire clause, caused her to reach up for the

lexicon in the book-shelves that hung above her desk.

The desired book was on the second shelf, but on the first stood a row of volumes that had been the subject of more than one joking remark since Essex had first unpacked and set them there.

"Two histories of the navy, a 'Life of Farragut,' a 'History of the War of 1812,'" a daring freshman had proclaimed the titles, and then inquired: "Miss Thurston, were you under the impression that this was a training-school for Annapolis?"

Later on, when the story of the new student's odd name began to get abroad, the same girl had exclaimed, "To think of being burdened in that fashion when one was helpless to protest; and then having to grow up to the obligation of matching such a name with one's books and pictures!" For by that time the new study was quite in order, and the most prominent positions on its walls had been filled by two large pictures, the one a fine engraving of Marshall Johnson's *Constitution*, and the other an equally fine etching

of the duel between the *Merrimac* and *Monitor*. The first had been Mr. Thurston's present to his niece on her sixteenth birthday, while the second had come as a delightful surprise from Senator Caxton the Christmas after Essex's famous visit to New York.

Since the first unpacking and arranging of treasures in Essex's study, a third picture had come to keep the others company; neither etching nor engraving this time, but the simple black-and-white pictured cover of an illustrated weekly. However, the subject and its treatment made it a worthy companion for the other two, for it represented the battle-ships *Oregon* and *Texas* coming forward at the height of their wonderful speed in that glorious fighting chase for victory one famous July morning in the summer of '98.

No name of a donor had come with this gift, but across one corner of the picture's broad white mat was written, in Mr. Henry Bruce's handwriting, "Just as the United States navy always has behaved!"

And though Essex Thurston had never denied her knowledge of the author of this quo-

tation, even her most intimate friend had failed to induce her to tell the name.

At about the same time with the appearance of the third picture, one or two volumes had joined the row of favorites on the lower book-shelf. It was one of these—"Our Navy in the War with Spain"—that had stopped Essex's hand on her way to the Latin lexicon.

At that moment the door was opened hastily, a white envelope made its fluttering entrance, and a voice said :

"Forgive the impoliteness of the delivery ; this was put in my box by mistake, and I am in a most tearing hurry."

Essex crossed the room and seized the envelope eagerly. Only one of her correspondents used paper of that size and shape—dear Miss Nancy, whose letters were always such a delight and inspiration.

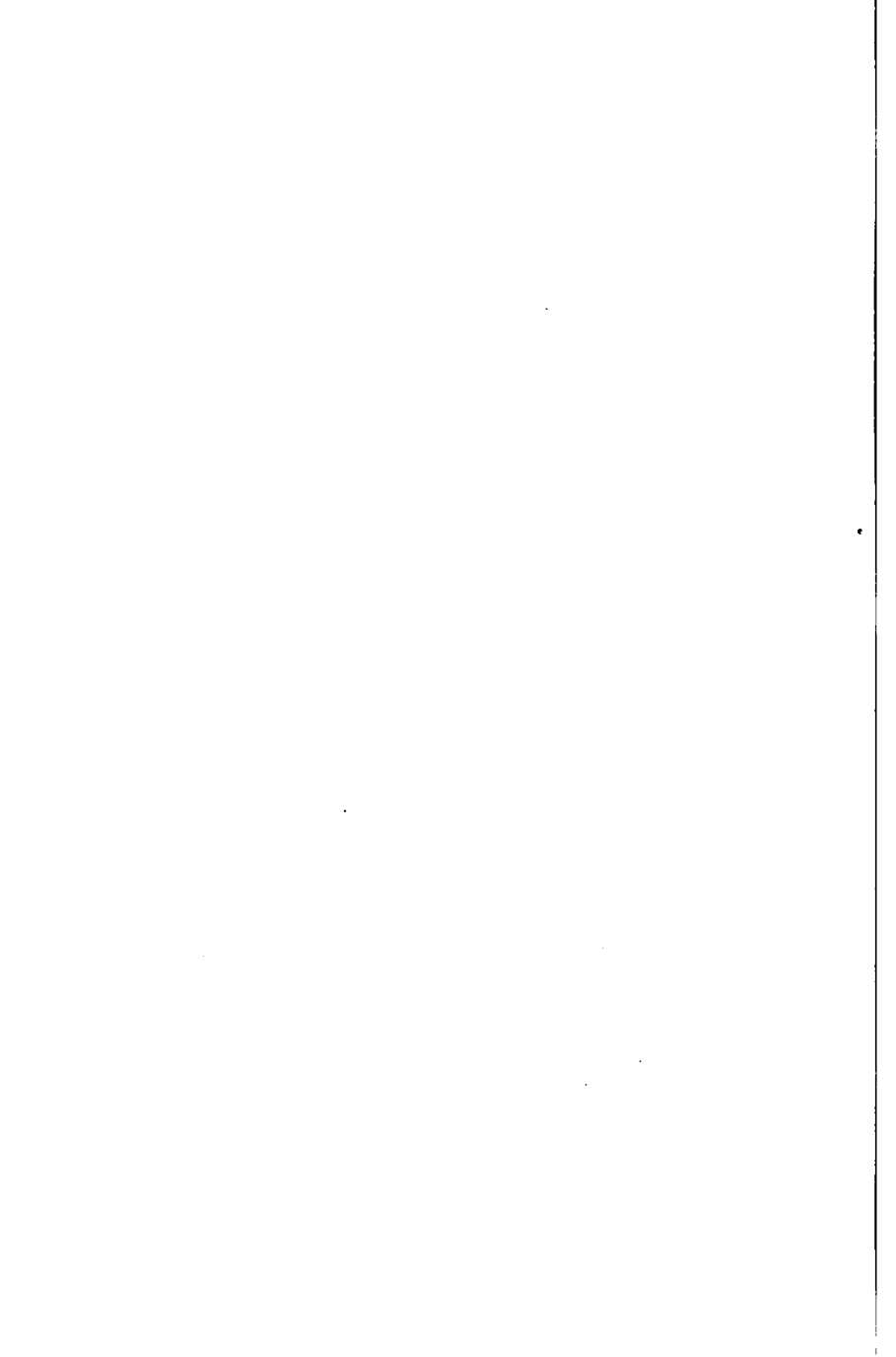
Half-way down the first page she stopped, all the color suddenly leaving her cheeks.

Returning to her former seat, she placed the letter on the desk before her, and recommenced its reading. It was evidently no sad news that caused the excitement ; the light in





**"IT WAS EVIDENTLY NO SAD NEWS THAT CAUSED  
THE EXCITEMENT."**



the eyes so eagerly devouring the pages denied that fact. But when the reading was finished, a yellow head went down on a navy-blue sleeve, and for the next five minutes the little watch lying on the desk had everything its own way.

Then the bowed head came up with a toss of pride, and for the third time Essex read the bewildering announcement:

ESSEX, MY DEAR: Our chance has come at last, and if all goes well, the next of this country's war-ships will be christened as war-ship was never christened before — by two sponsors, one to supply the will, and the other the deed. I have consented to take the first office, but only on condition that you will accept the second.

Then the lady went on to explain that ever since the construction of the battle-ship *Wineegan* had been authorized, the governor of the State — Essex's old friend Senator Caxton — had insisted upon Miss Bruce's naming the vessel.

It is now several months [the letter ran] since I absolutely refused to consider the proposition, and the governor as absolutely refused to take no for an answer. Finally I succeeded in convincing him that any hitch in the

christening ceremony would be an outrage to the navy, the State, the ship, and her builders, and that although I felt perfectly capable of supplying all the suitable emotions, yet a head, heart, and hand that have done service for over threescore and ten years are not always to be depended upon for extraordinary occasions. "Very well," he said; "we will get some one to perform the duties of which you do not feel capable." It was such a unique idea that it quite took my breath away—as I hope this letter will do with yours. And then he asked, "Was n't Essex Thurston born in this State?" And with my answer to that question, he declared the whole matter to be settled. So you are to stand at my side, break the bottle, and say the words; but all the rest,—the thrill and the joy and the pride,—remember, are to be left entirely to me.

I believe the governor intends writing to you himself, but there is one matter that we mentioned to which I am sure he will not refer, so I am taking the liberty to do so. We had been speaking of that visit to New York in ninety-three, and he mentioned you in a way that showed that he still thought of you as a little girl. I felt obliged to stand up for your years and collegiate dignity. Then he made this remark: "How time does fly! I was just thinking how appropriate it would be to have such a little figure as Essex Thurston was, that night in New York, to help with the launching; but I suppose no girl of her age could resist such an occasion for frilling and fussing." That is all I shall say, except that the ribbons are at your service, and that this time, if you choose to wear them, it will be as your own.

Yes, there is one thing more. I know you will agree with me in wishing to make some gift to our ship, something in which we shall each have a share — yours to say what it shall be, much the harder part, and mine to do the providing. How would an ornament for the forward turret strike your fancy? That is merely a suggestion, so do not let it influence you in the least. Of course there are many months before us, so there is no need of a hurried decision. I only thought you might enjoy thinking it over.

Enjoy thinking it over! The question was whether, in those months to come, she would be able to think of anything else.

In the meanwhile, Latin, German, Greek, and various other subjects entirely foreign to war-ships and to war-ship naming demanded her attention.

Fortunately for her college record, Essex Thurston still possessed the convenient power of deferring her "thinkings over" to suitable seasons. So all dreams of the great day that was coming were only allowed at recreation-times. But what dreams they were!

Miss Nancy kept her informed of the progress on the *Wineegan*, and Mr. Bruce succeeded in obtaining for her a copy of the

general specifications of the ship. The latter she read so often that she soon knew the more important points quite by heart. So the winter went slowly by, and in the early spring came an official notification of the date for the launching.

After that it was simply letting the hours drag past till the day should come for her to join her mother and uncle on the train bound southward to New York.

## CHAPTER XVI

**T**HE long-looked-for day came at last ; and with every turn of the car-wheels Essex seemed to hear an echoing ring from the hundreds of hammers at work in the great shipyard far away to the south.

The night before the launching was to be spent with the Bruces in New York. Miss Nancy had arrived there several days before, and so very bright and vigorous did she appear that Essex's greeting was a reproachful "Oh, Miss Nancy, Miss Nancy, you ought to do it all yourself!"

To which Miss Bruce made reply: "Hold out your arm, child, and let me see how steady it is. How many sheep do you suppose will be needed to send you to sleep to-night?"

The evening was spent in making the acquaintance of the various Bruce sons, nephews, and grandsons, all eager to see and know the girl who, Aunt Nancy and the governor seemed perfectly sure, was the one person to assist them in the great ceremony.

"Miss Thurston," demanded a lively collegian, "were you really born in Wineegan?"

"Why, yes," answered Essex, wonderingly. "But I am afraid I have never appreciated the privilege as I ought."

"Well, I am very glad to have your word for the fact. We thought perhaps aunty and the governor had been putting up some fish-story on the State to serve their own purposes."

"Miss Thurston," — the questioner this time was a fourteen-year-old "prep-school" boy, — "what has become of your dog, the one whose picture Aunt Nancy has?"

"Poor Alert! It did seem too bad to leave him behind, but he is quite old now. Besides, his behavior is apt to be somewhat uncertain. Since I have been at college he has grown rather independent. We are so glad to see



each other at vacation-times that I cannot bear to be strict with him."

At this point, Essex's attention being claimed in another direction, Walter Bruce turned to his Uncle Henry, who happened to be standing near.

"What a pity she did n't bring her dog! I know I could have managed him."

"Can you keep a secret?" and Mr. Bruce bent his head and whispered a few words.

"That 's something like!" was the boy's emphatic comment. Then, seeing his Aunt Nancy was for the moment disengaged, he pranced across the room, sure of a sympathetic listener for the account of his latest school prank.

The following morning, when the south-bound express was well on its way, the passengers in the cars between the baggage-van and the "special" reserved for the Bruce party were highly diverted by a sudden rush through the aisles of a magnificent collie with a very red-cheeked school-boy in tow.

A moment later; my Lord Alert was holding a royal reception.

"Don't talk to me of old age wearing out a dog's strength!" exclaimed Walter Bruce, still panting from his late rapid progress. "If there is any danger of the *Wineegan's* slipping too fast off her ways, just let them hitch that fellow to her bow and start him in the opposite direction."

"What I should like to know," remarked Mr. Thurston, looking down upon the latest arrival, who was resting in perfect content, with his fore paws in his mistress's lap—"what I should like to know is to whom we are indebted for this sudden invasion."

"Do you remember my stopping at the office on our way to the train?" asked his sister. "I found a telegram there with such emphatic orders that I dared not disobey. So there was nothing to do but send Caleb out to the island to bring Alert ashore, and despatch him by the night express."

"I know who sent the orders," said Essex. "Alert, shake hands with Mr. Bruce, and give him your best thanks."

"Very well," said Mr. Thurston; "you will please remember, Bruce, that you are respon-

sible for any irregular proceedings that are more than likely to occur."

"I accept the risk," said his friend, as he shook the offered paw and stroked the silky head laid for a moment against his knee, that being Alert's "best" method of expressing gratitude.

The train reached its destination at noon. Governor Caxton was awaiting them on the platform of the station, and the whole party drove immediately to the hotel for luncheon.

The launching was to take place at three; so directly after the meal most of the gentlemen left for the shipyard.

"My dear," the wife of Mr. Robert Bruce's oldest son said to Essex, as the ladies went to their rooms, "we are all so anxious to know what you are to wear. Aunty has refused to give even the slightest hint."

Essex looked troubled. "I do hope you will not be disappointed, but it is the simplest possible kind of a gown."

"Essex is dressing to please the governor and me," said Miss Nancy.

"And mother and myself," protested the subject of the discussion.

"Then if it pleases those four people, it will surely be a success," was the inquirer's cordial response.

And, indeed, it would have been a most captious critic who would have found fault with either of the leading figures of the little group who, half an hour later, came down the broad hotel stairway.

On the right was stately little Miss Nancy, more charming than ever in her trailing dress of navy-blue velvet, its dark folds relieved only by the snowy tulle about her throat and the tiny white plumes in her bonnet. And beside her walked Essex Thurston, wearing, as she had said, "the simplest sort of a gown" — blouse and skirt of finest white bunting, trimmed with rows of silver braid and embroidery of silver stars. But under the broad collar and around the slender waist, tied by Miss Nancy's own hands, were the white-starred ribbons, and a knot of the same formed the only ornament — except its own wealth of golden locks — to the most proudly

held little head in the United States. Half-way down the stairs, Essex saw an expression of pleasure come into Governor Caxton's face.

"True blue, I call this!" he exclaimed as he came forward to escort them to the carriage.

"Now how about Alert?" said Uncle Owen, as he placed his sister beside Miss Bruce.

"If Miss Nancy and mother do not mind," said Essex, from the opposite seat, "I think he had better drive with me. There won't be so much chance of his getting excited beforehand. But I can't help being worried. Do you think you will be able to hold him?"

"I rather think that will be Mr. Bruce's business; but I would n't worry"—closing the carriage door. "You know he always has behaved when it was really necessary that he should."

"If I only had something to put in his charge, like a bouquet or a wrap," said Essex, as they came in sight of the shipyard.

"There was something said about flowers yesterday, but we came away so hurriedly that

I suppose no one had time to think of them," said Miss Nancy.

But some one evidently had made the time ; for as the carriage stopped, Mr. Henry Bruce appeared at the door with his hands full of blossoms.

"The white lilacs for you, Aunt Nancy," he exclaimed, handing Miss Bruce a large cluster of her favorite flowers ; "the New England posies, of course, belong to Miss Essex"; and with the words there fell into the girl's lap the most wonderful bunch of May-flowers she had ever seen.

Next came the introductions to the president and superintendent of the great ship-building firm. According to previous arrangements made at the hotel, the governor was to escort both Miss Bruce and Essex to the launching-stand ; but as the party stood in line, ready to start, a cab dashed furiously up to the entrance, and from it alighted a white-haired naval officer in full uniform.

With cordial bows to right and left, he passed through the party till he reached the governor and his companions.

"Ah, commodore!" exclaimed the former. "This is as it should be. I had quite given you up."

"There was great danger of a collision of duties, but the other affair had to sheer off. It would never have done for me to miss taking my latest command into her bravest engagement. Miss Essex, allow me," offering his arm. "I had the governor's promise of this six months ago."

As the party passed through the great yard, crowded in every corner with waiting spectators, Essex, for the first time, began to realize that the coming ceremony might be somewhat of an ordeal. When the governor and Miss Bruce reached the foot of the stairway leading to the gaily decorated launching-booth, a quick signal from the superintendent set all the air a-quiver with the noise of the hammers driving home the great oaken wedges which were to put under the hull the great cradle upon which the ship was to glide into the water.

The commodore conducted Essex to her assigned position.

As she withdrew her hand from his arm, the sound of heavy breathing behind her made her turn. Instantly she laid her bouquet upon the platform, and gave the low-toned command: "Charge—and—hold, sir!" The words had hardly left her lips, when Alert dropped as if shot, one shaggy paw resting on each side of the mass of blossoms, and the sharp nose pressed close against their stems. The question of the behavior of the most uncertain member of the party was completely settled.

And now the blows of the great hammers are slowly dying away. The last one ceases. There is a moment of breathless silence, then far below is heard the sound of a single saw.

Once again Essex turns, this time to meet the fond look in her mother's eyes with her proudest, happiest smile. Then, as the governor places the ribbon-bedecked bottle in her right hand, she lays her left in that of Miss Nancy, the rest of the company fall back, and the two stand side by side, awaiting the supreme moment.



Suddenly, above the whirring strokes of the saw, rises the sharp crack of snapping timber; the great hull shivers, and stirs in her bed. With a crash of splintering glass the bottle strikes square upon the receding prow, and clear and true rings out the girlish voice:

"I christen thee Wineegan!"

Amid the waving of flags, the shrieks of whistles, and the cheers of the vast crowd, the shapely hull speeds down the ways, and, with a mighty rush, passes gaily and buoyantly out upon the waters of the great river beyond.

And there, in the sight of most of the spectators, her voyage is successfully completed. But in the vision of two pairs of eyes she still moves on: out and away to the beautiful, broad sea-room that is hers of right—a simple hull no longer, but the latest pride of a nation's navy, with masts, armor, turrets, and guns all in place, the dark smoke-clouds streaming from her funnels as she cleaves the monster waves with her matchless speed. And the spray rising cloud-like before her powerful prow dashes higher and ever higher till it

falls at last upon the beautiful emblem between the great guns of the forward turret—a wreath of laurels, wonderfully wrought in bronze, inclosing a shield which bears as its sole device the immortal words of the dying hero:

“DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP.”







